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Tempers flare in Senate session

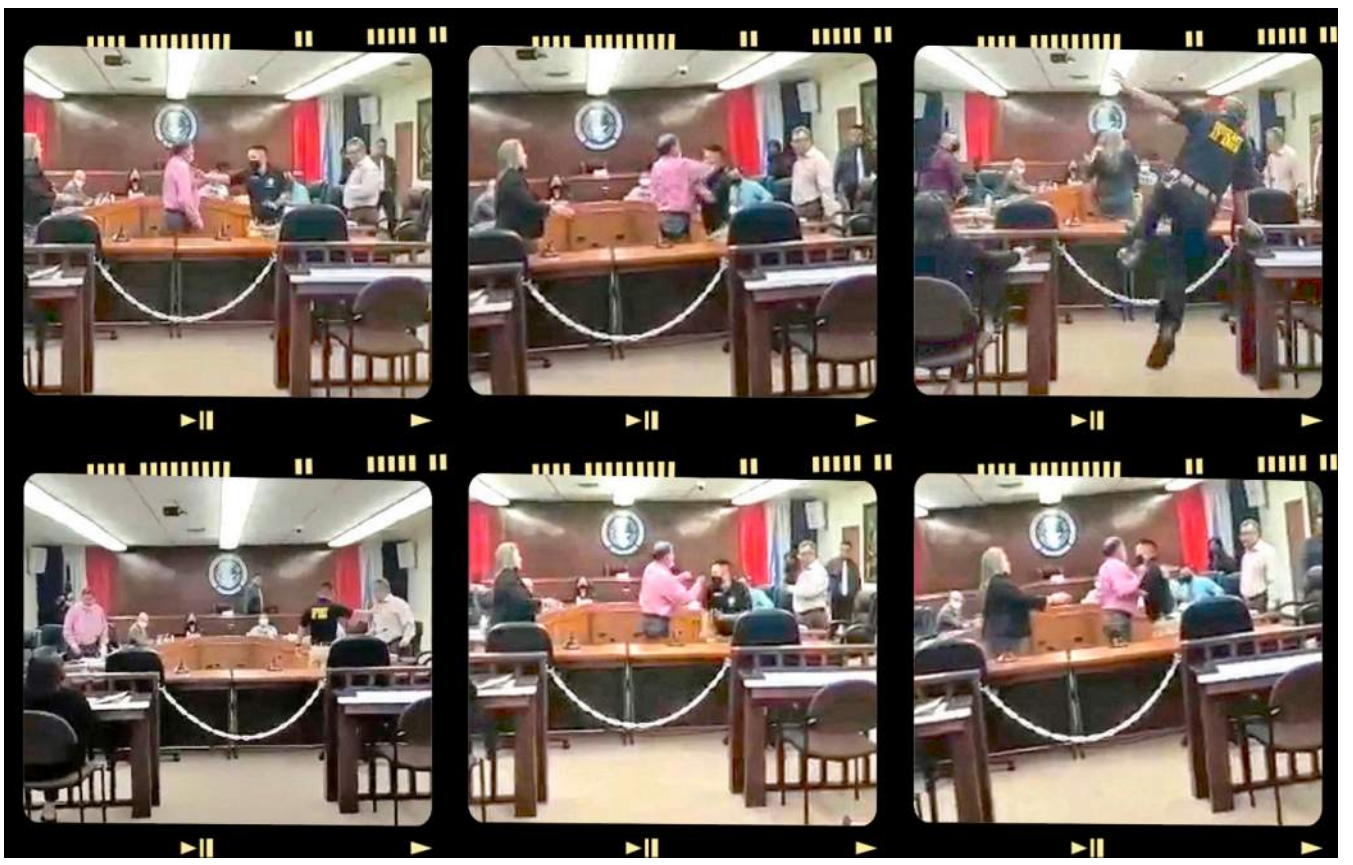
By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Senate abruptly adjourned yesterday a special session intended to tackle the Impeachment Rules after Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) and Sen. Victor B. Hocog (R-Rota) had a shouting match during the recess and almost came to blows had nobody intervened.

A video circulating yesterday on social media shows that the heated argument erupted when, during a session recess, Manglona talked with Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) outside the chamber and insisted that he be allowed to talk at the podium, not as a senator but as a member of the public.

Hofschneider said no,

See TEMPERS on Page 4



A video circulating yesterday on social media shows Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) and Sen. Victor B. Hocog (R-Rota) almost coming to blows during a recess in the session.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Putin puts nuclear forces on high alert, escalating tensions

By YURAS KARMANAU, JIM HEINTZ, VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and DASHA LITVINOVA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—President Vladimir Putin dramatically escalated East-West tensions by ordering Russian nuclear forces put on high alert Sunday, while Ukraine's embattled leader agreed to talks with Moscow as Putin's troops and tanks drove deeper into the country, closing in around the capital.

Citing "aggressive statements" by NATO and tough financial sanctions, Putin issued a directive to increase the readiness of Russia's nuclear weapons, raising fears that the invasion

See PUTIN on Page 4

Rise in fuel prices results in FAC increase

With the increase in the prices of fuel comes an increase in the price of electricity in the CNMI.

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. announced yesterday that it will be increasing its Fuel Adjustment Charge, effective today, March 1, 2022, from $0.23908 per kilowatt-hour to 911.27122 per kWh.

In a news release yesterday, CUC said that it has been notified by its fuel supplier, Mobil Oil Mariana Islands Inc., that there has been an increase in the average international fuel oil prices that will affect the FAC.

The FAC is one of two

See RISE on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 6:52pm, Feb. 28, 2022

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population Additional Dose Vaccinated: 56.8%

Days since last community transmission: 2

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	38,020
Fully Vaccinated:	37,152
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,336
Fully Vaccinated:	5,197
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,139
Additional Dose:	21,186

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	44,344	229	44,573
Recovered	40,143	990	41,133
Active	2,883	229	3,112
Deaths	322	6	328

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	9,595	0*	9,595
Recovered	8,638	0*	8,638
Active	927	0*	927
Deaths	30	0*	30

*No update

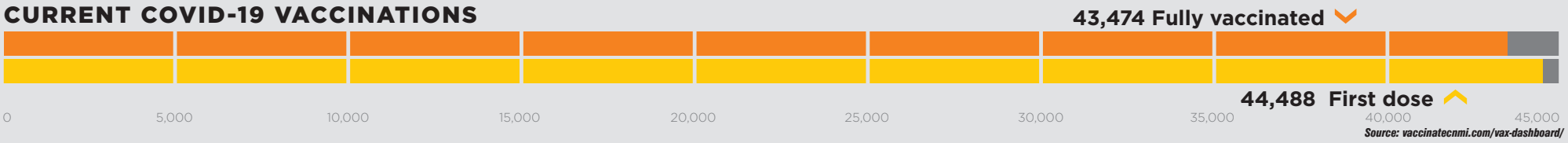
Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- Red: Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- Green: Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Source: vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

INSIDE

BUSINESS
Europe and Canada said Sunday they would close their airspace to Russian airlines.
Page 11

ASIA
Parts of Brisbane were under water Monday after heavy rain brought record flooding.
Page 13

OVERDRIVE
Check out the 2022 TRD Toyota Tundra at the Atkins-Kroll Toyota showroom in San Jose.
Page 14

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Six COVID-related deaths in Guam

The Joint Information Center in Guam was notified of six COVID-19-related fatalities yesterday, bringing to 328 the number of people who have died in Guam due to COVID-19-related illnesses.

The 323rd COVID-19-related fatality occurred at the Guam Regional Medical City on Feb. 23, 2022. The patient was a 74-year-old female, fully vaccinated with a booster, who had underlying health conditions and tested positive on Feb. 11.

The 324th COVID-19-related fatality was pronounced dead on arrival at GRMC on Feb. 23, 2022. The patient was a 63-year-old male, unvaccinated, who had underlying health conditions and tested positive on Feb. 10 and again on Feb. 22.

The 325th COVID-19-related fatality occurred at GRMC on Feb.y 23, 2022. The patient was an 88-year-old male, fully vaccinated without a booster, who had underlying health conditions and tested positive on Feb. 13.

The 326th COVID-19-related fatality was pronounced dead on arrival at GRMC on Feb. 24, 2022. The patient was a 63-year-old female, fully vaccinated with a booster, who had underlying health conditions and tested positive on Feb. 22.

The 327th COVID-19-related fatality was pronounced dead on arrival at the Guam Memorial Hospital on Feb. 26, 2022. The patient was a 67-year-old female, fully vaccinated with a booster, who had underlying health conditions and tested positive on Feb. 20.

The 328th COVID-19-related fatality was pronounced dead on arrival at GMH on Feb. 27, 2022. The patient was a 74-year-old male, fully vaccinated without a booster, who had underlying health conditions and tested positive on Feb. 22.

The JIC news release yesterday quoted Guam Gov: Lou Leon Guerrero: "Too many of our families have experienced loss and grief resulting from this deadly virus. To them, we extend our most heartfelt sympathies and prayers. While we recognize the amazing progress we've made these past two years, we cannot let our guard down. Wear your mask, wash your hands, watch your distance and get vaccinated and boosted. Also, please keep a close watch on vulnerable loved ones. We have testing open for all and lifesaving treatments available." (Saipan Tribune)

Docomo Pacific offers $5 credit

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

To make up for the network issues that Docomo Pacific subscribers experienced last Friday that caused temporary connection disruption of all its services, Docomo Pacific is offering its consumers a credit of $5 to be applied to their next billing.

According to Docomo Pacific public relations officer Jared Roberto, the company empathizes with the situation that their subscribers had to go through. "We understand that this incident deeply affected our customers, and we apologize. All Docomo Pacific consumers with home internet, entertainment, postpaid or prepaid mobile and home phone services will receive an automatic credit of $5 per service subscription," he said. "The credit will be applied to their current billing cycle. If a payment was already made, the credit will be applied to your next bill. For example, if a customer has four postpaid services, the total credit will amount to $20."

The network disruption started mid-afternoon Friday last week, interrupting mobile, office and home phone access, internet, and cable TV services. The company said that

See DOCOMO on Page 4

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy 63rd birthday to Rep. Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero and may the Lord continue to bless you with love, strength, and good health, especially for this coming election. Greetings come from your Committee To Elect Lee Pan for Mayor of Saipan 2022 Team.

‘Palacios, House leaders did nothing about divert airfield project’

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said Friday that he does not see any reason why he should have invited the House of Representatives’ leadership at last week’s groundbreaking for the divert airfield project on Tinian since they don’t believe in his administration and did nothing about the project.

In response to questions about the groundbreaking during a radio press briefing, Torres also stated that Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, who is running for governor in the Nov. 8 election, is manufacturing an issue about him not being invited for the Tinian event.

The governor said Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan’s office was notified and invited.

Rep. Vicente Camacho (D-Saipan), who chairs the House Federal and Foreign Affairs Committee, said Tuesday that the Commonwealth Bureau of Military Affairs did not inform him about the groundbreaking that happened that day. Camacho urged the CBMA chief to inform him of such events taking place in the CNMI, since he is chairman of the Federal and Foreign Affairs Committee.

House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) also confirmed with *Saipan Tribune* that he was not invited. He refused to comment.

Palacios said in a statement last week that they need to rise above petty politics and allow all leaders to be involved in official CNMI-federal functions such as the airfield groundbreaking ceremony.

Palacio said he was the secretary of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources during the Divert Airfield NEPA review process.

As senator, Palacios said he used his experience as DLNR secretary and former director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife to provide valuable input to the Divert Airfield Environmental Impact Statement.

Torres pointed out Friday that the House Democrat representatives refused to grant him 100% reprogramming authority of the budget pertaining to retirees’ bonus, saying they’ve already impeached him. “Now they want to be invited to a success that none of them did any work for,” Torres added.

With respect to Palacios, the governor said Palacios is gunning for his position, yet wants Torres to invite him and be included in a project and the work that he (Torres) has done.

Torres

Torres said if Palacios and some of these representatives have any success and claim that they brought in millions of dollars through their hard work, or they brought in something that will benefit the CNMI, he will congratulate them.

In a statement Sunday night, Torres said beleaguered politicians chose to complain about a missed photo opportunity instead of celebrating a monumental success for the people of Tinian.

“It never stops surprising me the extent to which politicians in the CNMI go out of their way to make a photo or an invitation a greater priority than working for the people they were elected to serve,” the governor said.

» Governor says Delegate Sablan was invited to groundbreaking ceremony

He said the groundbreaking on the largest Department of Defense project on Tinian is a monumental event for the CNMI and, most importantly, the people of Tinian.

Torres said that, while many would like to take credit for this investment on Tinian, it was the leaders of Tinian throughout the decades since the Covenant negotiations, the current leadership of the island, the Commonwealth Ports Authority, and the many men and women throughout the departments and agencies of the CNMI and federal government who put in the work to actually make it possible.

“Just as it always is, it is the hard work of the people of this government that make accomplishments like this happen,” he said.

The governor said departments and agencies put in a lot of work on military activities in the CNMI. He said it is no different with the divert project, where countless hours were spent reviewing and commenting on voluminous documents and put in great effort into working with the U.S. Air Force to support moving the divert projects into the construction phase and to ensure the rights of the people of the CNMI are upheld.

Torres said the groundbreaking ceremony was part of celebrating and recognizing these years of hard work by these employees.

He said it must be remembered that those who were invited were those who contributed to this success—CPA, members of the Cabinet, departments and agencies, the leadership of Tinian and the Senate, and members of the Legislature who contributed and/or supports his administration’s efforts in building partnership with DoD, to include Delegate Sablan.

“Should these politicians ever decide to do any work toward the issues that actually matter to the Commonwealth, I would celebrate that accomplishment whether or not they invite me to take a photo with them,” he said.

The governor said these politicians want to make this day about their missed photo opportunity.

He said these politicians want to appear near successes of this administration while simultaneously saying they don’t believe in his leadership.

“Let’s call out hypocrisy when we see it and be adults. There are more important things we need to do, and I’ll celebrate this House leadership and the lieutenant governor whenever they begin to recognize this,” Torres said.

The governor said when the world is still watching the violence unfold in Ukraine and the nation is mounting its resources to ensure the protection of the ideals of freedom and democracy, to cheapen this example of the CNMI doing its part to support national defense by making it about a photo opportunity for beleaguered politicians is a shame.

To those politicians looking for a photo opportunity, Torres said he has invitation in advance—they are going to continue to do the hard work necessary to realize major advancements for the people of the CNMI.

He vowed to continue to seek opportunities to have the CNMI contribute to the nation’s resiliency and protection, see even more opportunities become available that will advance the quality of life for all residents of these islands.

“Whenever you seek to be a part of the actual work it takes to see these things become a reality and stop demeaning the hard work of the men and women of this government, you are more than welcome to join in celebrating the accomplishments of this administration, this Commonwealth and the people who serve within it,” Torres said.

WANTED: SPORTS REPORTER

Hafa Adai! Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI’S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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Black Micro: Environmental protection is our highest priority

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

TINIAN—As construction on the Tinian divert airfield moves forward, members of the community fear for the preservation of the Tinian environment but the company contracted to complete the military project, Black Micro Corp., says that environmental protection is their utmost priority.

According to Leonard Kaae, senior vice president and general manager of Guam-based Black Construction Corp., although the construction of the $161.8-million project is intensive and potentially harmful to Tinian's environment, BMC will do its best to be good stewards of the environment.

"Environmental protection of [Tinian's] plant and animal species is the highest priority for us and ensuring that we are good stewards of the environment," he said.

Kaae explained that the 46-month-long project involves a major mobilization effort. "To give you a brief overview of the project and what to expect, BMC will undertake a major mobilization effort including asphalt, concrete and rock crushing plants. We're going to bring in bulldozers, excavators, loaders, graders, a lot of construction equipment to get this job done," he explained.

In addition, BMS will also develop approximately 1,000,002 cubic yards of land to accommodate a new taxiway for military aircraft.

"Work includes the airfield development at the Tinian International Airport, which encompasses approximately 1,000,002 cubic yards of mass excavation for the development of a new taxiway, as well as parking aprons for 12 fueling aircraft. Site development also involves clearing grubbing, major excavation, demolition site improvements, pavements, and utilities. Work also includes power poles' full installations. On the pavements, we have approximately 20,000 cubic yards of PCC pavement, and about 55,000 tons of HMA hot asphalt," Kaae said.

Due to the amount of work to be done and the duration of the project, Kaae said BMC expects a lot of employment opportunities for the residents of Tinian.

"The project duration has a period of 46 months so we'll be here quite a while. We've already burned three months and we're beginning to mobilize a project and are actively engaging and moving more and more equipment as well as manpower to undertake the major task before us. BMC certainly looks forward to this opportunity and providing employment opportunities for the local residents of Tinian, and working with the local business community," he said.

Last week, BMC held its first job fair on Tinian.

In a previous statement from Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan, he said the divert airfield project will continue to demand a labor force that will create more employment opportunities for the people of Tinian moving forward.

"Over the past couple of years, many of us have envisioned the potential economic growth that the divert airfield project would bring to Tinian starting with employment, and business opportunities, to procuring locally goods and materials," he said.

Taxi company sues ICE for allegedly causing car crash

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A local taxi company operator and one of its drivers are suing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the U.S. District Court for allegedly causing a car crash back in May 2019 that resulted in business loss as well as loss of wages for the plaintiffs.

Taxi driver Mohammed Mizanor Rahman and taxi operator Mohammed Habibur Rahman are suing ICE for negligence after one of its employees allegedly caused a car crash on May 14, 2019, along Middle Road.

The plaintiffs, through their lawyer, Joseph Horey, is asking the court to grant them damages in the amount of $4,280 for Mizanor Rahman and $8,575.25 for Habibur Rahman.

According to the complaint, on or about May 14, 2019, Mizanor Rahman was driving a taxi in the southbound inner lane of Middle Road when the vehicle in front of him slowed down and came to a stop as its driver prepared to turn left into the parking lot of the DHL building.

When Mizanor Rahman stopped behind the turning vehicle, the taxi he was driving was hit from behind by another car that was allegedly being driven by an ICE officer.

"[The officer] owed a duty of reasonable care to other users of the highway, and he breached that duty by failing to keep a proper lookout or take reasonable avoidance action. His negligence proximately caused the collision, and such negligence is imputed to defendant," Horey said.

Horey claims that his client, Mizanor Rahman, suffered lost wages, out-of-pocket expenses, emotional distress, and business loss, while Habibur Rahman suffered damages in the form of repair costs and business loss.

Horey said his client submitted their claims to ICE but both claims were rejected without explanation.

"On or about July 16, 2019, Mizanor submitted his claim, in the amount of $4,280, to ICE. On or about July 16, 2019, Habibur submitted his claim, in the amount of $8,575.25, to ICE. On Aug. 26, 2021, ICE rejected both plaintiffs' claims without explanation," Horey said.

RISE

From Page 1

components that make up the CUC electric kWh rate, which is used to purchase fuel. The second component is the CUC base rate, which is used to fund operations, projects, and debt service. This base rate has not been increased since April 17, 2014.

CUC is required, pursuant to an order previously issued by the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, to adjust (up or down) the FAC pass-through rate when the Mean of Platts Singapore, or MOPS, monthly pricing equals or exceeds a 4.5% differential of the average per gallon cost of fuel used in the calculation of the current FAC rate.

CUC first instituted the Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause in 2009 to recover fuel and fuel related costs, a system also used by power providers in Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In May 2015, the CPUC authorized CUC to change the name of LEAC to FAC to provide customers a more accurate description of the electric rate. ***(PR)***

DOCOMO

From Page 2

cable TV services. The company said that the proximate cause of the outage was an "inadvertent fiber line break."

"Our tech teams have identified the issue to be an inadvertent (on-land) fiber line break in Guam. This fiber cable feeds into the ATISA cable, which caused the service outages in the CNMI. Customers in the southern villages of Guam were affected by this cable break. Our teams worked throughout the night and saw services in Guam and CNMI slowly come back around 10pm," Roberto said.

While waiting for a formal announcement from Docomo Pacific that explains the network disruption, some members of the community speculated that a cyberattack was taking place due to the conflict in Eastern Europe that involves Russia and Ukraine. Docomo Pacific said that wasn't the case and assures the public that they are ready for any form of cyberbreach into their network, according to chief legal officer James Hofman. "Docomo Pacific works closely with the U.S. departments of Justice and Homeland Security and is in regular consultation with the FBI and other law enforcement resources to monitor and detect a variety of threats. We have adopted best practices consistent with both physical and cybersecurity to keep our networks and customers' data secure," he said.

For more information about Docomo Pacific's credit to customer billing, call (670) 488-2273. They are open Monday to Saturday from 8am to 6pm.

PUTIN

From Page 1

of Ukraine could lead to nuclear war, whether by design or mistake.

The Russian leader is "potentially putting in play forces that, if there's a miscalculation, could make things much, much more dangerous," said a senior U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss rapidly unfolding military operations.

Putin's directive came as Russian forces encountered strong resistance from Ukraine defenders. Moscow has so far failed to win full control of Ukraine's airspace, despite advances across the country. U.S. officials say they believe the invasion has been more difficult, and slower, than the Kremlin envisioned, though that could change as Moscow adapts.

Amid the mounting tensions, Western nations said they would tighten sanctions and buy and deliver weapons for Ukraine, including Stinger missiles for shooting down helicopters and other aircraft.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office, meanwhile, announced plans for a meeting with a Russian delegation at an unspecified location on the Belarusian border.

It wasn't immediately clear when the meeting would take place, nor what the Kremlin was ultimately seeking, either in those potential talks on the border or, more broadly, from its war in Ukraine. Western officials believe Putin wants to overthrow Ukraine's government and replace it with a regime of his own, reviving Moscow's Cold War-era influence.

The fast-moving developments came as scattered fighting was reported in Kyiv. Battles also broke out in Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, and strategic ports in the country's south came under assault from Russian forces.

By late Sunday, Russian forces had taken Berdyansk, a Ukrainian city of 100,000 on the Azov Sea coast, according to Oleksiy Arestovich, an adviser to Zelenskyy's office. Russian troops also made advances toward Kherson, another city in the south of Ukraine, while Mariupol, a port city on the Sea of Azov that is considered a prime Russian target, is "hanging on," Arestovich said.

With Russian troops closing in around Kyiv, a city of almost 3 million, the mayor of the capital expressed doubt that civilians could be evacuated. Authorities have been handing out weapons to anyone willing to defend the city. Ukraine is also releasing prisoners with military experience who want to fight, and training people to make firebombs.

In Mariupol, where Ukrainians were trying to fend off attack, a medical team at a city hospital desperately tried to revive a 6-year-old girl in unicorn pajamas who was mortally wounded in Russian shelling.

TEMPERS

From Page 1

pointing out that the public comment portion had already been closed.

Manglona then went inside the chamber and stated in a loud voice that the Impeachment Rules are unconstitutional and that he is taking this to court. The sound of someone banging on the table could be heard on the video as well as an expletive.

It was not clear in the video who banged the table and said the expletive but it appeared to rile Hocog, who stood up from where he was seated and walk toward Manglona, with both of them having a shouting match in the vernacular. A legislative sergeant-at-arms, Hofschneider, and Sen. Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) had to step into the fray to stop and pacify Hocog and Manglona. Hofschneider then signaled to another sergeant-at-arms, who then jumped over the chamber's barriers and pacified Manglona.

Legislative Bureau director Perry Tenorio was seen asking people in the gallery to remain calm in their seats.

When the session resumed after a few minutes, Hocog was present but Manglona was not in his seat. Floor leader Sen. Vinnie Sablan (R-Saipan) then moved to adjourn the session and it was seconded.

Hofschneider later uploaded a video on social media where he apologized to the public for the breakdown in decorum during the session.

Prior to the shouting match, the Senate was accepting public comments from a podium that was located outside the Senate chamber but was connected inside via a microphone. One of those making a public comment was Rep. Corina L. Magofna (D-Saipan). When Hofschneider told her to wrap up her comments, Manglona stated he does not like limiting the speakers' comments but before he could finish, the president asked him why he was talking without being recognized on the floor and therefore intervening in the proceedings. Manglona grabbed his documents from the table and walked to the podium area, after which Hofschneider called for a short recess.

After Vincent Aldan, a former Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) employee, completed his public comments, Manglona stood before the podium, at which point Hofschneider said he would call for a short recess and closed the public comment portion.

Manglona started delivering his comments, but the microphone system had already been cut and the video was turned off.

Manglona later told *Saipan Tribune* that he did not walk out of the session, but simply went to the podium area to speak as a member of the public.

Manglona also said he did not go back to the session because no one told him that the session had resumed.

He said the general public was prevented from providing any oral testimony pertaining to the Impeachment Rules during the one and only meeting by the Senate Joint Impeachment Committee.

He said neither one of the Senate minority members was appointed to either of the two committees responsible for these impeachment rules, despite he and Sen. DeLeon Guerrero's urging and Hofschneider's promise to appoint a minority member.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

Kilili: NMI residents must file income tax return to get EITC, child tax credit

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

To receive the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, residents of the CNMI must file an income tax return with the Commonwealth's Division of Revenue and Taxation even if one owes no taxes, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) over the weekend.

In his e-kilili newsletter, Sablan said the American Rescue Plan Act includes a permanent, 100 % payment of the EITC for those who file in the Marianas, and that 2021 is the first year this benefit is available.

He said the tax credit (maximum $6,728 is fully refundable.

"In other words, any amount of the credit not used to pay your taxes is paid directly to you," he said.

Sablan was able to include full and permanent federal funding for tax credit in the ARPA last year, a legislative proposal goal he first set in 2015 with the introduction of H.R. 4390.

In June 2021, then-acting governor Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios signed into law House Bill 22-19, House Draft 1, that would repeal an existing law in order to make low-and-moderate income working families in the CNMI eligible for the EITC as a form or financial relief.

Rep. Christina E. Sablan (D-Saipan) filed the bill repealing the 100% tax on the EITC imposed by the Legislature in 1998. Rep. Angel A. Demapan (R-Saipan) managed to include an amendment to the bill to include a subsection to ensure that only the EITC law is being considered and does not include other excess credits outside of the EITC.

Sablan estimated last year that the annual value of the EITC is $25 million.

Last week, Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig disclosed to the media that the CNMI expects to disburse $50 million in EITC following the U.S. Treasury's approval of the Commonwealth's implementation plan.

Atalig said the Division of Taxation will soon release guidance on how qualified, low income families in the CNMI can apply for these credits.

Sablan

EITC is an offset against taxes owed. A taxpayer who owes $100 in taxes and has a $70 credit would only have to pay $30.

Sablan also said over the weekend that fully refundable is the Child Tax Credit, which was increased to $3,000 per child (and $3,600 per child under age 6) in the American Rescue Plan.

"Up to half their money has already been paid out to eligible families in the Marianas, but to collect the rest of the Child Tax Credit it is absolutely necessary to file a 2021 tax return with the Commonwealth," he said.

The delegate said eligible families that did not receive a partial payment will be able to collect the amount when they file their return.

Sablan: CNMI retirees are not political pawns

Sablan

Rep. Christina Marie Sablan (D-Saipan), who chairs the House Health and Welfare Committee, issued the following statement about the retiree bonuses proposed by the Senate during the House session Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022:

"Mr. Speaker and colleagues, members of the public, and especially our government retirees, the retiree bonus is not the problem. It is not the subject of debate. There is bipartisan support across this Legislature. We in the House unanimously supported the bonus when it was originally proposed at $500. And we support it now at $1,000.

"We know that so many retirees live on the fixed incomes that their pensions provide, and that these incomes do not adjust with the rising cost of living. We know that retirees need this help. The retiree bonus is not the problem.

"The problem is the rider that keeps getting attached to the bonus. The problem is the governor wants 100% reprogramming authority over the budget and he is once again using and manipulating retirees to serve his own political ends.

"Imagine that: this governor wants unlimited power over the public purse. After running deficits for six straight years. After we just impeached him for misspending public funds and abusing public trust. Six articles of impeachment for corruption. Commission of felony. Neglect of duty.

"After we reviewed and exposed thousands upon thousands of pages of government records documenting illegal first-class travel, theft, extravagant reimbursements, 85 boating trips using public safety resources, and utilities at two private residences plus water for the commercial piggery.

"After we have just learned about more lucrative sole-source contracts that this administration has awarded for weekly Zoom conferences, an app that no one seems to know about, and a ridiculous amount for a single company to sanitize public buildings.

"After we have just learned about the outrageous fees that taxpayers are paying for his army of attorneys to fight the JGO investigation and impeachment.

"The sad, hard truth is that this governor cannot be trusted with public funds. But he will try to take more control anyway and he has no qualms about using retirees to do it. After all, he has done it before.

"But retirees are not political pawns. They should never be used as political pawns. Where is the logic in giving this governor more power over public funds? Where is the justice in that? There is none. It would defy common sense and conscience to do so.

"The fact of the matter is that had the Senate simply passed the bill that we sent them many weeks ago, the retiree bonus would be on the governor's desk by now. The facts also show that this House has identified the funds and properly appropriated for the retiree bonus not just once, but twice, with the bill that Chairman Manglona has introduced today.

"My message to the governor: cut the politricks. Stop using the retirees. Stop using the Senate. Live within your means. Respect the reprogramming authority that the law already gives you. Let's give the retirees the bonus they have been waiting for, and let's do this the right way. No riders. No games. No 100% reprogramming. No more politricks.

"And while we are helping retirees, let's also help everyone else who needs help. Expand premium pay to the public and private sector employees who have been excluded so far. Issue the new local stimulus to the thousands of qualified taxpayers and dependents who really need this help.

"The governor doesn't have to wait for the Legislature to act on the new local stimulus and premium pay. He can do it right now. He is the expenditure authority for American Rescue Plan Act funds. What is he waiting for?" ***(PR)***

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

March Fiduciary Essentials training set

The Guam-based Asia Pacific Association for Fiduciary Studies announced yesterday that the March Fiduciary Essentials training will be offered in Guam and the CNMI:

■ Guam- Hyatt Regency Guam

Tuesday, March 8, 7:30am-5pm: Hosted in partnership with University of Guam and Guam Community College.

■ CNMI-Saipan

Thursday, March 10t, 7:30am-5pm: Hosted in Partnership with Northern Marianas College

To register, download registration form (and submit to admin@apafs.org. Registration is on first come bases and late registration fee will be imposed after March 3.

The is a one-day classroom-based course, designed by fi360®, which covers all of the components of a comprehensive investment process and related standards of care to include the seven global fiduciary precepts. Successful completion of the program is recognized by the awarding of a certificate of completion and allows participants to apply for membership to the Fiduciary Academy. All course materials and lunch will be provided. ***(PR)***

CHCC website moves to new address

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. updated its website address to https://www.chcc.health/.

Patients are still able to pay their bills online (for services that occurred on Saipan), as well as view the latest CHCC-related information, such as forms, job opportunities, RFPs, and health services.

Residents who have saved the CHCC website as a bookmark should update their settings. All links pointing to www.chcc.gov.mp will redirect to www.chcc.health.

The CHCC will continue to make its website more user friendly and accessible for the community. ***(PR)***

BOH announces $400,000 community investment

HONOLULU, Hawaii—Bank of Hawaii announced last week that that it will invest approximately $400,000 to address community needs as part of its yearlong 125th anniversary celebration.

"Taking care of our community is intrinsic to Bank of Hawaii, and we can think of no better way to recognize this milestone anniversary than to invest in the future of the people we are so privileged to serve," said Peter Ho, chairman, president and CEO at Bank of Hawaii. "As we celebrate and embark on the next 125 years and beyond, we look forward to helping to sustain our island home, both in the state of Hawai'i and in the West Pacific."

To preserve the environment and help address climate change, Bank of Hawaii is partnering with Hawaiian Legacy Reforestation Initiative to plant 125 trees per week for one year on the bank's behalf. Trees provide many benefits, including purifying the air by absorbing pollutant gases that cause global warming. Replenishing forests is necessary to the ecosystem—just one large tree can provide a day's supply of oxygen for up to four people. In total, the 6,500 trees that this endeavor will produce will be planted by HLRI across the state (on O'ahu and Hawaii Island). In addition, Bank of Hawaii plans to partner with an organization to invest in a similar program in the West Pacific region.

In an effort to support a wide range of causes, Bank of Hawaii is also inviting its employees to help the community. Each BOH employee will have an opportunity to select a nonprofit of their choice, for Bank of Hawaii Foundation to make a $125 donation. With approximately 2,100 employees, the final donation would amount to more than $260,000 of additional funds for communities across Hawaii and the West Pacific region.

In its milestone year, Bank of Hawaii is honored to celebrate the official language of Hawaii by adding the 'okina to its logo/name, and will begin to incorporate the change throughout the organization where the logo is used.

Incorporated on Dec. 17, 1897, Bank of Hawaii has been committed to strengthening communities through philanthropic support, hands-on volunteerism, sponsorships, board participation and employee giving.

To learn more about Bank of Hawaii's history, please visit www.boh.com/125 for a digital timeline of the bank's accomplishments, milestones and community support, as well as videos featuring our employees and customers. ***(PR)***

MCDONALD'S SPONSORS NMC GOLF TOURNEY

McDonald's continues its support for education through its sponsorship of the hole-in-one prize of $5,000 for the upcoming Northern Marianas College Golf Tournament. This will help attract golfers to enter for a chance to win the valuable prize. NMC president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, left, is joined by NMC students in receiving the donation from McDonald's Saipan owner/operator Marcia Ayuyu, right, and Mable Glenn, executive assistant to McDonald's Saipan and Guam president Joe Ayuyu. McDonald's has been supporting NMC's events with donations since 2010.

KRIZEL TUAZON

JKPL, Pacifica Insurance team up to restore Susupe medians

The Governor's Council of Economic Advisers announced Friday the completion of another incredible community transformation project.

Through GCEA's Marianas Village Pride Adopt-A-Median project, volunteers from the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library and Pacifica Insurance Underwriters joined together to adopt the Susupe medians along Route 30 in front of the library and the insurance building.

Staff and friends of the library and insurance company cleaned and repainted two medians last Feb. 6.

Erlinda Naputi, JKPL's director and the project's leader, said the GCEA's MVP Adopt-A-Median project was a great opportunity for JKPL to build teamwork among its staff while participating in an outdoor activity.

"We feel proud that we helped our environment and beautified and maintained our infrastructure. This year, we celebrate our 30th anniversary with a year-long series of programs and events that highlighted our mission, thanks to the continued support of our community, our patrons, and our dedicated team. Our participation in the GCEA's Adopt-a-Median Program marks the first of many library-sponsored activities that celebrate our 30th anniversary. These beautification efforts all lead into our National Library Week events, which we are gearing up for in March and April," said Naputi.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Joeten Kiyu Public Library and the Pacifica Insurance Underwriters team cleaned and repainted the medians and curbs in front of the library and insurance building last Feb. 6. Before and after photos can be found on GCEA's Facebook page (@cnmieconomy).

She said that JKPL was not alone in this beautification effort, having partnered with Pacifica Insurance Underwriters, Inc. and the Friends of the JKPL. Naputi commends both partners for their hard work and volunteerism.

"We would like to send a special shoutout to the CNMI Department of Public Safety for assisting and protecting our teams while out in the field. We also thank [Rep.] Joe Flores (Ind-Saipan) for stopping by and donating some refreshments for our hard-working team. Our hard work continues as move on to Phase 2, which is the repair and painting of the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library's parking lot," said Naputi.

Shirley Sablan, Pacifica Insurance Underwriter's president, admires JKPL's partnership and the tremendous work in the community. Sablan was joined by her staff who helped enhance an important area on the island.

"Erlinda and her team at JKPL do tremendous work for our community and their presence is felt at every corner. GCEA's Adopt-a-Median program is just one of their many involvements and it is admirable to witness big-hearted public servants take their passion beyond the four walls of our library. It is always a pleasure partnering up with them and supporting their initiatives. We are extremely proud of our team who deserve all the credit for bringing to life the medians in front of JKPL and grateful to all other groups/organizations who have done the same. Adopted medians are not only beautiful but they also enhance safety," said Sablan.

"I'm sure everyone in our community have taken notice of the numerous beautification efforts around our islands. Like GCEA's Adopt-A-Median, similar programs are designed to create beautiful and long-lasting memories and pleasant experiences for both our *taotao tano* and guests. The CNMI is our home. Like every home, ours need just as much tender love and care. With a community of resilient people who are always ready and willing to lend a helping hand, we have no shortage of hands to help us move mountains. We just need to make time," said Sablan.

As JKPL celebrates its 30 years in the community, Naputi said that joining the MVP Campaign's effort in beautifying the island was one way to give back.

"The MVP Adopt-a-Median Campaign is one way to give back to our community. Beautifying our islands help us appreciate what we have. It is not just for visitors to enjoy the beauty of our Marianas but for us locals to appreciate the uniqueness and beauty that our island has to offer. The Adopt-a-Median Program is one way to get involved in improving public infrastructure and maintaining safe spaces for our community. Let's work together to beautify our neighborhoods! We encourage all organizations—private and public—to help beautify our islands! Help clean our environment," added Naputi.

GCEA extends its appreciation to both partners who helped each other to revitalize an important median in a busy area.

Before and after photos can be found on GCEA's Facebook page (@cnmieconomy). For more information about the Adopt-A-Median program and the Marianas Village Pride Campaign, visit the GCEA website at cnmieconomy.com or contact the council at gceacnmi@gmail.com. All GCEA Public Private Partnership projects are made possible by the support of the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan's public benefit fund with the Department of Public Lands. ***(PR)***

CNMI DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

PUBLIC NOTICE

The CNMI Department of Commerce, Central Statistics Division is preparing to conduct the CNMI 2022 Prevailing Wage Study (PWS) survey to begin on March 01, 2022 and notifies all businesses and employers in the CNMI to log on to the CSD Data Collection Portal and complete the PWS survey questionnaire.

All businesses and employers, with and with no employees, are urged to complete this survey before March 15, 2022.

Data Collection Portal Link:
http://cnmidata.commerce.gov.mp/

Rodney S. Cabarles, Chairman · VACANT, Vice Chairman · Joanna C. Aldan, Secretary · Ringo C. Reyes, Treasurer · Megan C. Mendiola, Board Member

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
TINIAN MUNICIPAL SCHOLARSHIP BOARD
Municipality of Tinian and Augiguan

PO Box 520059 • San Jose Village • Tinian, MP 96952
Phone (670) 433-0504 • Fax (670) 433-1819
Email: tinianscholarship@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9910(a), the Tinian Municipal Scholarship Board hereby gives notice that there will be a Special Board Meeting on Friday, March 4, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., at the Tinian Public Library, San Jose Village, Tinian. We welcome the Public to attend.

AGENDA

I. **PRELIMINARY**
A. Call to Order
B. Roll Call
C. Reading of the Agenda
D. Adoption of Agenda

II. **PUBLIC COMMENTS***

III. **NEW BUSINESS**
A. Review of SPR 2022 Applications & Supporting Documents for Approval or Disapproval for Scholarship Awards

IV. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
(Consultation with Legal Counsel)

VII. **ADJOURNMENT**

/S/Rodney S. Cabarles
Chairman

[1]We ask that remarks be limited to 3 minutes each. Everyone is welcome to submit written comments on the day of the meeting.
[2]Pursuant to 1 CMC section 9912, the Board may vote to meet in executive session at any time.
[3]Individuals with special needs requiring special accommodations, please contact the TMSB office at least 48 hours prior to schedule meeting for assistance.

Faith, Hope and KARIDAT

A Northern Mariana Islands Social Service
RE-ANNOUNCEMENT
JOB VACANCY

ONE (1) SHELTER WORKER

For more information, job description and application can be obtained from Karidat Main Office at Sister Remedios Community Center Chalan Kanoa.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED: Complete application form, copy of diploma, resume, police clearane valid within 6 months and a copy of valid CNMI driver's license.

NO PHONE INQUIRIES PLEASE.
CLOSING DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2022 AT 4:00PM

GCC congratulates 22 with boot camp certificates

MANGILAO, Guam—Guam Community College honored a combined 22 participants in the Diesel Mechanic I and Construction III boot camps in a completion ceremony on Monday, Feb; 28, 2022.

Through GCC's partnerships with Employer Sponsors in the private sector, these participants will have employment opportunities in the very industries they have trained for.

Diesel Mechanic Boot Camp GCC employer private sector partners include Triple J Enterprises, Inc., Mr. Rubbishman, Mid Pac Far East, LLC, East West Rental Center, Inc., Guam Pak Express, Inc., Pepsi Bottling Company, and Morrico Equipment, and Atkins Kroll Inc. Inland Builders is the private sector partner for the Construction Boot Camp.

"We identify our employer partners at the onset of the program to provide the motivation for students to focus on the competition so that they can all become employed. All of these students represent a very important part of our future. They've committed time to learn the trade and skills and now they have the opportunity for employment. That is an amazing opportunity, not just for employment, but for a career," said Dr. Mary Okada, president of GCC.

"How exciting is this? From training, you go into a career, an actual career, and application of what you have learned. Thank you to all of you [here] for your motivation and your efforts in making our community economy even stronger," said Guam Gov. Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero.

Of the 22 completers, 13 are from the Diesel Mechanic I boot camp with courses like Introduction to Diesel Tech and Preventative Maintenance I and Diesel Tech and Preventative Maintenance II, Diesel Engines I.

The Construction III boot camp was fully funded by the Department of the Interior's Technical Assistance Program Grant awarded to GCC. There were a total of nine completers and they have all completed courses relative to the industry: Introduction to Carpentry, Electricity Level 1, and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Level 1. In addition to these courses, students will also receive their certification to provide Basic First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation with an automated defibrillator. ***(PR)***

Construction III completers. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Construction III group photo. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Diesel Mechanic completers. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dr. Mary Okada, president of Guam Community College, addresses the attendees. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Diesel Mechanic group photo. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NMHC launches CDBG-DR affordable rental housing development programs

» Application intake for Tinian applicants only; deadline March 30

As a result of the damage sustained from Typhoon Mangkhut and Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018, the CNMI received an allocation of Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funds, which is administered by the Northern Marianas Housing Corp.

In order to address both the direct and indirect impacts of the two storms, the Commonwealth has developed the Rental Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and New Construction Program to cover the eligible costs for repair or replacement of storm-related damage to individual site rental properties as well as to increase the stock of rental units with new construction or acquisition of individual units. Available rental units prior to the disaster were quickly rented, thus creating an even bigger shortage of available and affordable, safe, decent rental units.

On May 28, 2021, and July 28, 2021, the NMHC board of directors adopted the Rental Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and New Construction Program policies and procedures—under the CDBG-DR Affordable Rental Housing Development Program. The three CDBG-DR Affordable Rental Housing Development Programs being made available to the public include 1 to 4 Units, 5 Plus Units (Non-LIHTC) and GAP Filler to LIHTC.

Application intake for Tinian applicants only. Deadline is March 30, 2022

5 Plus Units (non-LIHTC) Program: The program proposes to address the current housing rental shortage through the rehabilitation and development of affordable rental housing, including acquisition, demolition, rehabilitation and new construction, as it pertains to the development of subsidized and affordable units for Low-to-Moderate Income individuals/families. For detailed information on program, see: https://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com/resources/policies_procedures/

Applications may be picked up at the CDBG-DR office at the Tinian field office (NMC campus) from 8am to 4pm or access our CDBG-DR website at www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com. For additional information, contact the NMHC CDBG-DR Division on Saipan at (670) 233-9447, on Tinian at (670) 433-9213, or via email cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net. ***(PR)***

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Putin wants to break Western solidarity. That must not happen

Russian President Vladimir Putin's brutal, lawless invasion of Ukraine is the consequence of the former KGB head's messianic vision and numerous Western miscalculations over the past two decades. President George W. Bush looked into Putin's soul and mistakenly found him "very straightforward and trustworthy." President Barack Obama saw a time to reset the U.S.-Russia relationship. President Donald Trump not only refused to criticize Putin but openly expressed admiration for him, while questioning NATO's reasons for being and undermining American intelligence efforts.

Western Europe's energy dependence on Russia and a series of high-level misreadings preceded the waves of Russian troops now trampling Ukrainian sovereignty. Whatever had masqueraded as a cold peace since the fall of the Soviet Union is now a new Cold War. Nor can there be doubt about who Putin is—a smart and ruthless tactician with ambitions to reconstitute the failed Soviet Union.

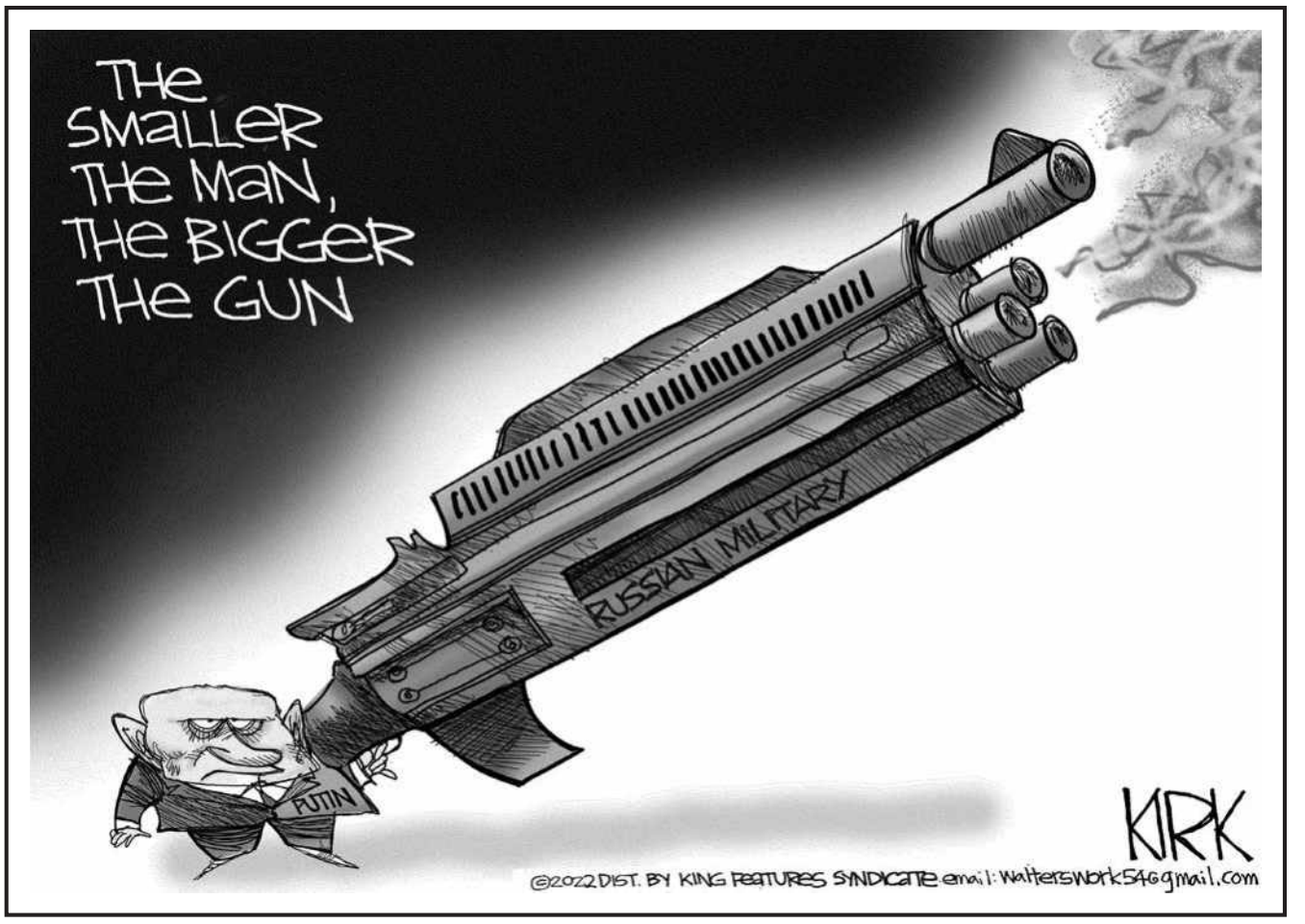
In an address just days prior to the invasion, the former spymaster spun a twisted narrative of disinformation to air old, new and fabricated grievances. In a fairy tale of hardline Russian nationalism, paranoia and distorted history, Putin asserted that Ukraine should be part of a Russian-controlled republic to justify military action. Notably absent from Putin's narrative was the popular will of Ukrainians. They desire to tilt away from Russia and toward the promise of closer economic ties to Western European economies, a choice that a despotic Putin despises.

The NATO alliance and a broader international coalition of the willing must stand strong in a moment that is as consequential as the years preceding World War II. NATO must continue to be a firewall to unfettered Russian expansion, and the international community must provide military equipment, and economic and humanitarian support so that Ukrainians can fight for their country. One analyst put it this way: Putin's invasion is a war of choice, the world's response a war of necessity.

That response matters not just to Europe, but to Asia, as well. China and North Korea are watching and trying to determine whether the time is ripe for them to pursue their long-standing ambitions to enforce their authoritarian wills on their neighbors.

U.S. troops must not set foot on the ground in Ukraine, which Putin would use as a provocation for full-scale world war, nor is there an appetite in the United States for that step. The world has roundly denounced Putin's actions and must remain united in the cause of the sovereignty of borders despite inevitable economic and other hardships that will come from opposing Russian aggression.

See PUTIN on Next Page


THE SMALLER THE MAN, THE BIGGER THE GUN
RUSSIAN MILITARY
PUTIN
KIRK
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If Putin doesn't fear Western sanctions, his cronies might

By ELIZABETH SHACKELFORD
Chicago Tribune

Elizabeth Shackelford is a senior fellow on U.S. foreign policy with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. She was previously a U.S. diplomat and is author of The Dissent Channel: American Diplomacy in a Dishonest Age.

A decade ago, I was a U.S. diplomat serving in Warsaw, Poland. I had a close group of Polish friends who, while not in the field of foreign affairs, had a strong fear of Putin's Russia. They were concerned his aggression and resentment would lead him one day to launch war again in Europe.

I dismissed their concerns as a Cold War hangover. Poland then seemed so prosperous and at peace, and Russia so weak compared with the EU. The 2008 invasion into Georgia seemed a far cry from a threat on Western Europe.

Then came the 2014 invasion of Crimea, the 2016 interference in our own elections and years of cyberattacks on the West. Putin has only grown bolder, as we have done our best to hope he wouldn't go too far. Today, it is inescapable that he has.

Vladimir Putin has chosen war. His army has invaded an independent country—a democracy, unprovoked, from three directions. This brazen action is triggering a reaction in the West and beyond that is unified in its condemnation. The extreme nature of the path Putin has chosen could finally be the driver of an effective Western response. It is a shame that it had to go this far to do so.

That response should not involve the United States engaging directly in war with a nuclear power, but we must be ready to take all other steps we can to impede Putin's aggression.

Putin wasn't banking on a unified NATO front, but it hasn't deterred him either. If Western allies can maintain this unity, it might hollow out the oligarch support Putin needs to stay in power, or at least to maintain his war.

Sanctions imposed now have two goals. The first is punitive and preventive. Broad economic sanctions against Russia must prevent Putin from using Western money to fund his war machine.

The second set of sanctions aims at a different audience entirely—those, especially the oligarchs, who may be in a position to press Putin to end his war.

In both cases, these sanctions must go far beyond what was imposed in 2014 when Putin first invaded Crimea. Those sanctions were mild, more symbolic than punishing. They were the actions of states that wanted to signal disapproval but didn't wish to suffer themselves financially to do so.

Sanctions announced thus far have gone much further, though experts are already debating how effective they will be. On the one hand, they have the practical impact of cutting Russia's government off from Western financing and from transactions involving U.S. dollars, the default global reserve currency.

At the same time, however, Putin has been preparing his economy for heightened Western sanctions since 2014. Thanks to high oil and gas prices, he sits on a large war chest, and he has transitioned most of Russia's debt to rubles. Putin is ready to weather the storm. But will the rest of Russia, the Russian elite in particular, be ready with him?

In addition to broad financial sanctions that will hit Russia's economy as a whole, and Putin's ability to pay for the war, the U.S., U.K. and European Union are also sanctioning individual oligarchs and their families. The families are a new addition, intended to cut off a path that Russian officials had previously used to avoid the sting of sanctions on themselves: using their kids to hide their wealth.

Russia's cozy relationship with China could help blunt the impact, but it is unclear so far how much China is willing to help. After his summit with President Xi Jinping earlier this month, Putin might have been expecting more hearty support than he has seen so far. China's foreign minister has continued to urge a diplomatic resolution while reiterating China's support for the "sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries."

In any event, it is unclear if Russia's oligarchs would be easily satisfied with a wholesale Eastern substitute for their ties with the West. They want vacation homes in France, not China. Their kids want to study in London, not Beijing.

And what will Russia, or Russia's elites, gain from this exposure, risking their access to and safe havens in Western markets and countries? A large, expensive, violent war. Ukraine might be outgunned, but it is not rolling over easily either. In tandem with sanctions must come increasing support to help Ukraine defend itself too. The costlier this fight is, the more likely Putin is to lose the support he needs at home to stay the course.

Putin relies on the Russian elites and military to stay in power. If the West aims to change Putin's path without getting dragged into a hot war, its hope lies in the ability to stay the course together, imposing increasing costs on Putin's inner circle and, in doing so, persuading the oligarchs that Putin's hubris is doing them no favors.

But if the oligarchs are excluded from the U.K. while their yachts can still dock in the Mediterranean Sea, that leverage is lost.

That unity may well depend on the willingness of citizens of the West to suffer some economic costs of the broad economic sanctions too. If inflation or gas prices go up and your 401(k) goes down as a result, give some thought to what democracy is worth to you.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

What the UN should do about Russia

By TRUDY RUBIN
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial-board member for the Philadelphia Inquirer. *Readers may write to her at:* Philadelphia Inquirer, *P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101, or by email at trubin@phillynews.com.*

How does the world confront a Russian leader who is acting like Hitler?

How should the United Nations deal with Russia, which has a veto in the Security Council but is led by a war criminal?

After his massive attack on a sovereign Ukraine, Vladimir Putin cannot be treated as a normal leader. He must be branded an international pariah and condemned by the vast majority of nations as an outlaw.

The U.N. General Assembly should suspend Russia from participation at the United Nations, as it did to apartheid South Africa in 1974.

Some may scoff that this would be irrelevant since it won't save Ukrainians in the short term. Neither will harsh economic sanctions that will only play out over time. And it's too late to send more defensive weapons to Kyiv for Ukrainian troops.

Yet Putin clearly cares about his international image. Otherwise he wouldn't be so obsessed about justifying his invasion by promoting the foul narrative that Ukraine's leaders are a bunch of Nazis threatening Moscow and bent on "genocide" against Russian-speaking Ukrainians.

Maybe, locked in his COVID bunker, Putin really believes this nonsense. But the rest of the world has to demonstrate that it rejects his lies. As Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is Jewish, plaintively asked, in a speech to the Russian people on the eve of the invasion, "How could I be a Nazi?"

In reality, Putin is aping Adolf Hitler, claiming the neighboring state of Ukraine has no right to exist, because he wants to annex it to Russia. The Russian leader has also promised to carry out "denazification" in Ukraine, which means Russian forces will seek to kill or imprison Zelenskyy and a list of other government leaders, along with civilians who oppose the invasion.

Since hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians are likely to demonstrate against any puppet leader imposed by Moscow, this opens the door for massive civilian casualties—and no one doubts Putin would be ready to inflict them. The Russian leader is already guilty of massive war crimes in Syria, where Russian planes deliberately bombed schools, hospitals, and markets in order to save the regime of Bashar Assad.

So it is critically important for the U.N. General Assembly to demonstrate that a majority of members—not just the West—sees through Putin's lies. As Ukraine's ambassador to the United Nations, Sergiy Kyslytsya, said Thursday: "Pretending now that the U.N. can work as if nothing happens will be immoral."

That immorality was on full view at a meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday night, as Putin—speaking in Moscow—thumbed his nose at the world body, formally announcing the invasion was on, just as council members were discussing how to prevent it.

Ironically, the meeting was being chaired by Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, since Russia holds the rotating presidency of the Security Council at the moment. It was as if Saddam Hussein were chairing a council meeting discussing how to reverse the invasion and annexation of Kuwait.

To add insult to injury, Nebenzia claimed: "We are being aggressive not to the Ukrainian people, but to the junta that is in power in Kyiv." You can't get more cynical than that Kremlin doublespeak.

Translated: A Russian dictator has the right to remove a president chosen by a free vote of the Ukrainian public—and replace him with a Kremlin-controlled regime. And he can kill as many civilians as he needs to get the deed done.

If the United Nations lets Putin get away with this claim, then the world body might as well declare itself dead.

However, there are signs that a broad segment of the U.N.'s member states understands that Putin must not be allowed to get away with murder.

The Kenyan ambassador to the Security Council, Martin Kimani, was quite blunt in a Security Council speech challenging Putin's dream of restoring the Russian empire. If that were acceptable behavior, Kimani said, then every African country would be at war with its neighbors trying to change borders drawn by former colonial powers.

And other members have surely noted that Putin hinted he was willing to use nuclear weapons against any nation that tries to "interfere" with his invasion, saying this "will lead to the kind of consequences you have never experienced in your entire history." Those are the words of a leader who could embroil the world in a nuclear war.

So it is time for the introduction of a U.N. General Assembly resolution to suspend Russia until such time as Putin pulls back from Ukraine. Or maybe indefinitely.

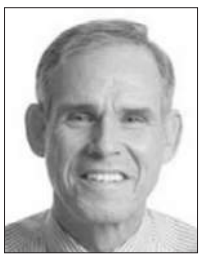
If enough U.N. members sign on, even China might recognize that its Russian ally is stabbing it in the back—by undercutting Beijing's sacred mantra that no country has the right to interfere in another country's sovereign affairs.

To paraphrase Ukraine's Ambassador Kyslytsya on Wednesday: "There should be no purgatory for war criminals. They should go straight to hell."

Meanwhile, the U.N.'s future is on the line, as is Ukraine's—and perhaps the world's.

The pandemic isn't over. Omicron won't be the last coronavirus variant to haunt us

By ERIC J. TOPOL
Los Angeles Times



Eric J. Topol is a professor of molecular medicine at Scripps Research and author of the newsletter Ground Truths.

Think back to late June 2021, when there was containment of the American COVID-19 pandemic with fewer than 12,000 new cases a day and a total of 15,000 patients in the hospital. There was a declaration of independence from the virus on July 4, just as the delta variant was starting its exponential growth. A major surge ensued, which was followed by yet another one with the omicron variant, peaking with nearly 160,000 people hospitalized and almost 2,700 deaths per day—the most deaths since vaccinations became widely available.

Even now, as we are descending from the omicron wave, we still have more than 60,000 patients in the hospital and more than 2,000 deaths per day.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus is still with us and is adroit at finding new ways to infect us at scale. As it evolved from the original strain in late 2019, and progressed to the alpha and delta variants, it became more virulent and infectious, not less. There is a misconception that the virus is destined to evolve to a more benign form. If we've learned anything from the pandemic, it's that the virus has an extraordinary ability to adapt—and it is unpredictable.

You can just look at the more than 50 new mutations present in omicron to know there are seemingly infinite ways for it to further mutate and rearrange the 30,000 base pairs in its genome. Although we'd be fortunate for it to morph into a common cold coronavirus cousin, we certainly can't count on that. There are just too many vulnerable hosts out there for more evolution of the virus to take place, including a wide variety of animals, with potential to spill over to humans.

There are more than 7 million Americans who are immunocompromised, who are not only highly vulnerable to infections, but also may provide an opportunity for the virus to evolve inside a person and then infect others. That path may indeed be the way omicron was created and spread.

Around the world, there are billions of people unvaccinated and likely without any protection from prior infection. In the U.S., there are more than 19 million children under the age 5 for whom there is no vaccine approved, and tens of millions of people have not been vaccinated. We currently rank 67th in the world for being "fully vaccinated" and 54th for having its population get an all-important booster shot that preserves a high level of protection against hospitalizations and deaths. When the virus is not contained, as is the case in the world now, its spread creates the potential for new variants.

In these new hosts, the virus could possibly evolve to a new, more deleterious version that attaches better and infects other organs, like the heart or gastrointestinal tract, instead of the lungs. We have already seen people with simultaneous co-infections of two different variants, which enables the swapping of RNA between them and generating a hybrid, potentially worse version of the virus. That swap could also be between an animal and human source, akin to human and bird flu recombination.

The result would be much more difficult for humans to recognize, overriding protection from our spike-protein vaccines or infection-induced immunity. While unlikely, full immune escape by a new variant would put us back to square one of the pandemic.

Even if these scenarios don't materialize, let's remember that omicron, despite being characterized as a milder form of the virus, can still be deadly for people without immunity. The original omicron known as BA.1 has sister variants, including BA.2 and BA.3, each with many new and different mutations. A recent study in a lab using an animal model suggested that BA.2 is more disease-causing and more immune-evasive than BA.1.

BA.2 has spread rapidly in some countries such as Denmark, South Africa, India and Sweden. However, all the data to date for BA.2 in people do not support any sign of worse disease or lack of protection from vaccines. BA.2 is not gaining legs in the U.S., but the explanations for this and for the rapid decline of omicron in many countries remain elusive. At this moment, it does not look like BA.2 poses a threat as a major new variant, but it would not be surprising if we see another variant in future months that deserves a separate Greek letter designation.

The good news is that we're probably moving to a relatively quiescent phase, with low numbers of cases and limited severe disease, representing containment of the virus. That is not the same as the pandemic being over. Unfortunately, when states or countries proclaim that we just need to live with the virus and end all restrictions, many people interpret that message as meaning the pandemic is actually over—for good. That would be a fantasy given the myriad opportunities for the virus to haunt us in the months and years ahead.

We have been extraordinarily lucky to date—getting such highly effective vaccines into the arms of billions of people in a time frame that would never have been considered possible before. These vaccines, with boosters, have held up solidly, protecting vaccinated people against severe disease even though they are directed toward the original strain of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Let's hope our luck does not run out. Getting prepared for worst-case scenarios is our best defense, with better genomic, wastewater and digital tracking of the virus, and bolstering protection with everything from better air filtration to accelerating efforts for a variant-proof, pan-coronavirus vaccine. Better to be smart against this formidable virus than lucky.

PUTIN

From Page 8

For Americans, our politics must end at the waters' edge and push back against the authoritarian strains that fuel Putin's aggression and dangerously infect European and American politics. Like Putin, authoritarianism knows no borders or bounds, and unity against it isn't optional. Putin's calculation is that the world will grow weary and give up.

The world has tried to flatter Putin, reason with him and otherwise coax him to be what he isn't. Like the fable of the scorpion and the frog, the world has been stung and we all now know who he is.

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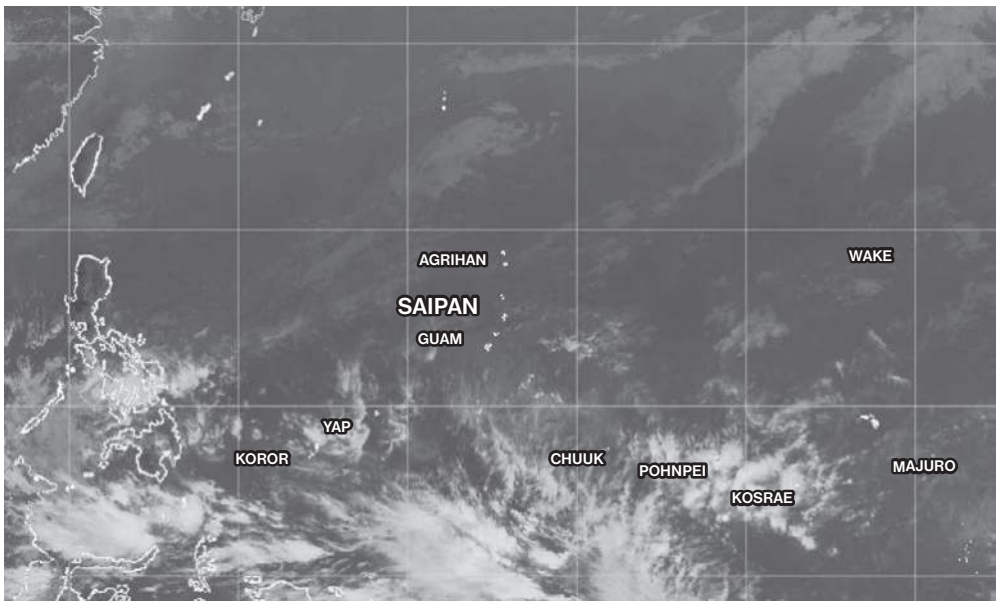
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with a chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Mostly cloudy with a chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
87º 76º	86º 75	86º 75º	86º 75º	85º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:14 AM, MONDAY, FEBRUARY. 28, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite imagery this morning shows partly cloudy skies across the Marianas, while Doppler radar does show a couple of isolated showers in Guam`s eastern waters. Ipan and Ritidian buoys continues to show seas around 7 to 8 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	AM Thunderstorms/Wind	29 / 25 °F
Palau	Partly Cloudy	30 / 26 °F
Yap	Thunderstorms	29 / 25 °F
Chuuk	Scattered Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F
Majuro	Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	06:34 AM	18:24 PM
Wednesday	06:33 AM	18:24 PM
Thursday	06:33 AM	18:25 PM
Friday	06:32 AM	18:25 PM
Saturday	06:31 AM	18:25 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	05:22	17:02 PM	-
Wednesday	06:11	18:01 PM	-
Thursday	06:55	18:57 PM	-
Friday	07:35	19:50 PM	-
Saturday	08:14	20:42 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	AM Clouds/PM Sun	24 / 17 °F
Beijing	Sunny	12 / 3 °F
Hong Kong	AM Clouds/PM Sun	23 / 18 °F
Honolulu	Sunny	28 / 20 °F
London	Rain	10 / 8 °F
Los Angeles	Sunny	29 / 12 °F
Manila	Mostly Sunny	33 / 24 °F
Melbourne	Rain	25 / 18 °F
Miami	Partly Cloudy	25 / 20 °F
New York	Cloudy	9 / 3°F
Osaka	PM Rain	13 / 8 °F
Paris	Cloudy	12 / 6 °F
Busan	Rain	15 / 3 °F
Rome	Sunny	13 / -1 °F
Salem	Partly Cloudy	21 / 5 °F
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	18 / 8 °F
Seoul	AM Light Rain	10 / -5 °F
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	18 / 9°F
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	15 / 4 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY	FEET	
12:37 AM	Low Tide	-0.51
07:44 AM	High Tide	1.81
1:13 PM	Low Tide	0.99
6:13 PM	High Tide	1.85

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

■ Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.

■ Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.

■ Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.

■ Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.

■ Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.

■ Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html

■ Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

■ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

■ Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

■ Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:

• Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.

• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 14, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:30am	8:20am	1, 3, 5
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 30)
TW9308	3:30PM	7:20PM	4, 7
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	3, 6

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA116	8:00am	8:46am	7
UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	2, 4, 7
UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/116	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
UA184/116	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 7 via Guam
UA184/116	10:55pm	8:46am+1	6 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 30)
TW9307	9:00AM	Q2:30PM	4, 7
OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	3, 6

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Daily
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

Europe, Canada close their airspace to Russian airplanes

By DAVID KOENIG
AP AIRLINES WRITER

AP
The Airbus A330 aircraft used for an Aeroflot international flight is prepared at Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow, on June 27, 2013.

Europe and Canada said Sunday they would close their airspace to Russian airlines after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, raising the pressure on the United States to do the same.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the European Union would shut down its airspace for planes owned, registered or controlled by Russians, "including the private jets of oligarchs."

Canada's transport minister, Omar Alghabra, said his nation was closing its airspace to all Russian planes to hold the country accountable for an unprovoked attack on its neighbor.

■■■

TOKYO (AP)—The Russian ruble plunges 26% after US, other western countries block Russian central bank from SWIFT banking system.

■■■

The European Union action came after many of its member countries had said they were barring Russian planes or planned to do so by Sunday night.

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo tweeted that European skies are "open for those who connect people, not for those who seek to brutally aggress."

"There is no room in Dutch airspace for a regime that applies unnecessary and brutal violence," Mark Harbers, the Netherlands' minister of infrastructure and waterworks, said on Twitter.

A handful of European nations including Spain, Greece and Turkey had resisted closing their airspace before von der Leyen's announcement.

Robert Mann, an aviation consultant in New York, said the moves by the European Union and Canada would put added pressure on the U.S. to also bar Russian flights.

"It is difficult to understand why we are last to move, both operationally and financially," he said.

As more airlines canceled flights in and out of Russia, and more countries blocked Russian airlines, the U.S. embassy in Moscow said Americans there "should consider departing Russia immediately via commercial options still available."

Russia has responded to western aviation sanctions by banning flights from several European countries. Russian airline S7 suspended flights to Europe.

On Sunday afternoon U.S. time, a Moscow-New York flight by Russian national carrier Aeroflot turned back after passing over Norway, according to flight-tracking services. The plane had been routed to fly over Canada. Other Aeroflot flights took circuitous routes after European countries began closing their airspace.

Growing tension between Russia and western nations over Russia's invasion of Ukraine have so far had a modest impact on airlines, which are trying to recover from huge losses since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. They face jet-fuel prices that have climbed more than 50% since last summer, and are likely to rise further because of sanctions against Russian oil and natural gas.

Airlines in the U.S. and Europe are expecting to pack planes with transatlantic vacationers this summer. Helane Becker, an airline analyst for Cowen, said Friday that she continued to expect strong travel demand from the U.S. to western Europe, but travel to eastern Europe "will be curtailed until there is some resolution or some assurance it won't spread to other countries."

George Dimitroff, an analyst for aviation-research firm Cirium, said most of the largest European airline had one or two daily flights to Moscow and St. Petersburg and won't be affected much, although Hungarian budget carrier Wizz Air, which had a hub in Kyiv, may feel the pinch slightly more.

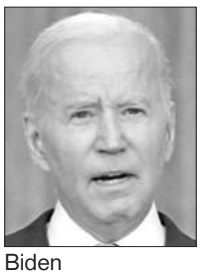
With European airspace closed off for now, Aeroflot, Rossiya and S7 "effectively become Russian domestic carriers," he said. Of those, Aeroflot had the most international flights.

The global tension is already costing some airlines more money to reroute flights.

Biden's Russia sanctions may let Moscow profit from oil, gas

By JOSH BOAK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

There is a glaring carve-out in President Joe Biden's sanctions against Russia: Oil and natural gas from that country will continue to flow freely to the rest of the world and money will keep flowing into Russia.



Biden

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Biden defended his decision to preserve access to Russian energy in order "to limit the pain the American people are feeling at the gas pump." But some academics, lawmakers and other analysts say that excluding an industry at the heart of the Russian economy essentially limits the sanctions and could embolden Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Energy exports are the whole game," said Columbia University historian Adam Tooze, an expert on finance and European politics. Politicians in the United States and Europe chose to "carve out the one sector that might truly be decisive. I don't think Russia is blind to what is going on and it must indicate to them that the West does not really have the stomach for a painful fight over Ukraine."

As part of a broader international push, Biden announced sanctions on Thursday that target Russian banks and the country's elites, and restrict the export of vital technologies that are key for the military and economic development. The U.S. and its European allies intensified the sanctions on Saturday by announcing plans to freeze the reserves of Russia's central bank and block certain financial institutions from the SWIFT messaging system for international payments.

But the rules issued by the Treasury Department allow Russian energy transactions to keep going through nonsanctioned banks that are not based in the U.S. And administration officials stress that the sanctions are designed to minimize any disruptions to the global energy markets.

U.S. crude oil prices closed Friday just below $92 a barrel, right where they were in the days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Still, gasoline prices at the pump are up more than 33% from a year ago to a national average of $3.57 a gallon, according to AAA.

Small Japan border easing stirs hope, worry for foreigners

TOKYO (AP)—Next week Japan will ease tough coronavirus border controls that have been criticized as xenophobic and damaging to the economy. The new rules, however, provide only a slight improvement: 5,000 new entrants per day, instead of the current 3,500, and nowhere near the estimated 64,000 a day that were entering for long-term visits before the pandemic.

The 5,000 daily arrivals also includes Japanese nationals returning to the country, which means hundreds of thousands of foreigners will still struggle to enter.

An estimated half million foreign students, teachers, workers accredited as technical interns and business travelers have been locked out and waiting to get in for nearly two years. Under the policy that takes effect March 1, it would take several more months of patience before everyone can get in.

"It's still better than nothing," said Jommy Kwok, who has missed nearly all of her first year of post-graduate classes in atmospheric science at Hokkaido University.

AP
Passengers wait in line before moving onto their temporary housing for quarantine as they come out of an arrival gate for international flights at the Narita International Airport in Narita, east of Tokyo, on Dec. 2, 2021.

Kwok was the only one in her class who had to take classes and do research online while remaining in Hong Kong. Her 20 classmates returned to the campus when coronavirus infections slowed rapidly late last year, before the more recent omicron wave. "I have been quite left out," she said in an online interview.

She hopes to arrive in Japan before the new school year starts in April and take more classes to catch up as much as possible before her scheduled graduation next year. She may also continue studies for a doctoral degree in Japan.

But she has competition. About 150,000 foreign students and scholars are waiting to enter.

Japan has banned nearly all entries of non-resident foreigners since early in the pandemic. The country announced an easing in November but quickly reversed that decision after the omicron variant emerged elsewhere in the world.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Japan will consider a further relaxation of border controls based on a scientific assessment of the omicron variant, infection levels in and outside Japan, and other countries' quarantine measures.

Nation

New York to lift statewide school mask mandate by March 2

NEW YORK (AP)—New York's statewide masking requirement in schools will be lifted by March 2, Gov. Kathy Hochul said Sunday, citing a dramatic drop in COVID-19 infections and new federal guidelines.

Hours later, New York City Mayor Eric Adams said he's considering lifting vaccine mandates on restaurants, bars and theaters by early next week if infections and hospitalizations continue their downward trend.

A mask mandate on the city's approximately 1 million schoolchildren could also be lifted, Adams said in a statement. The decision won't come until Friday, following a full week of classes after students in the country's largest school system return from a weeklong vacation, he said.

The pair of announcements signaled an important turning point for the city and state, once an epicenter of the global pandemic.

"The day has come," Hochul said at a press conference in Albany.

New guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says most Americans can now safely take a break from wearing masks, including students in schools.

"That is why I feel very confident that this is the time to lift the mask requirements," Hochul said.

As of Saturday, state officials said the 7-day average for new cases was fewer than 1,671 for the first time since late July. Other metrics have also fallen rapidly, including hospitalizations and deaths.

The CDC guidelines for other indoor spaces aren't binding, meaning cities and institutions even in areas of low risk may set their own rules. Hochul said counties and cities could keep their own mandates in place, and parents could still choose to send their kids to school in masks.

The new rules also apply to children 2 years and older in childcare facilities.

Hochul said Adams was consulted before her announcement, including a conversation earlier Sunday.

Despite criticism over the state's pandemic measures, Hochul said she remained resolute in sticking with experts and health data as her guide and "not let criticism and politics intervene in this decision-making."

Earlier this month, Hochul let a broad mask mandate for most indoor settings expire, but said the schools requirement would remain in place. She had promised to revisit the schools question by the first week of March.

The broad mask mandate was implemented during a COVID-19 surge fueled by the omicron variant in December.

Masks are still required in some places, including public transit, homeless shelters, jails and prisons, adult care facilities and healthcare settings.

Andrew Rigie, executive director of the NYC Hospitality Alliance, said lifting the vaccine requirements would be be positive step for restaurants, bars and theaters.

"We need to continue to be smart and safe, and also modify mandates as COVID risks are reduced. So this will be welcome news to many restaurants and bars, although I wouldn't be surprised if some businesses want to voluntarily keep it in place." Andrew Rigie, executive director, NYC Hospitality Alliance, said in a text message to The Associate Press.

The mayor has been hoping to begin lifting restrictions, but said his decisions, like those of the governor, would be influenced by key metrics.

Fence being reinstalled around US Capitol for Biden speech

WASHINGTON (AP)—Fencing installed around the U.S. Capitol for months after the January 2021 insurrection will be put back up before President Joe Biden's State of the Union address on Tuesday as concern grows about potential demonstrations or truck convoys snarling traffic in the nation's capital.

Security fencing shown around the Capitol in Washington, Sept. 16, 2021. AP

Capitol Police Chief Tom Manger said in a statement Sunday that the fence will be erected around the Capitol building for the speech and is being put up "out of an abundance of caution," in consultation with the Secret Service.

The move comes as officials in Washington prepare for trucker convoys that are planning protests against pandemic restrictions beginning this week. The Pentagon has already approved the deployment of 700 unarmed National Guard troops to be used to assist with traffic control during potential demonstrations.

Modeled after recent trucker protests in Canada, separate truck convoys have been planned through online forums. Many have different starting points, departure dates and routes, though some are scheduled to arrive in time for the State of the Union address. Others may arrive afterward.

Manger said his force's "mission to protect the United States Congress, the Capitol, and the legislative process remains unwavering." Manger said.

The fence had been a stark symbol of the fear many in the Capitol felt after the mob pushed its way past overwhelmed police officers, broke through windows and doors and ransacked the Capitol as Congress was voting to certify Joe Biden's electoral win. It remained up for several months.

The U.S. Capitol Police Board had approved a plan to briefly reinstall the fence for a rally in September that was organized to support people who remained jailed in connection with the insurrection. Law enforcement officers and members of the media vastly outnumbered the protesters and only a few incidents were reported.

ACROSS THE NATION

Las Vegas police search for suspects in hookah bar shooting

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Las Vegas police searched Sunday for suspects a day after after 14 people were shot during a party at a hookah lounge, leaving one man dead and two others critically wounded. Detectives believe two suspects who they did not identify exchanged gunfire inside the hookah bar and fled before police arrived before dawn Saturday, police said. Dispatchers received calls at about 3:15 a.m. about multiple victims suffering from gunshot wounds after an altercation at Manny's Glow Ultra Lounge & Restaurant. Police didn't immediately provide an update Sunday on a possible motive for the shooting, release new details or provide information about the suspects they were seeking. The injured people were taken to University Medical Center and Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center, but officials on Sunday didn't immediately provide condition updates about the 13 remaining patients. While police had described the condition of two victims on Saturday as critical, they did not disclose details about the nature of their injuries.

Search on for California boy, 2, in car when it was stolen

SUNNYVALE, Calif. (AP)—Authorities in Northern California searched Sunday for a 2-year-old boy who was inside a car when it was stolen before dawn in the San Francisco Bay Area. Police said the 2008 Buick Enclave was taken while Jacob Jardine's mother was unloading groceries at about 4 a.m. in the city of Sunnyvale, south of San Francisco. There was no immediate indication whether the thief or thieves knew the child was in the car when it was stolen, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. Investigators did not say if they had suspects or release any descriptions. Jacob has red, curly hair and brown eyes and was wearing a white hooded sweatshirt, officials said. The Buick has a blue "Baby on Board" sticker on it and temporary paper license plates from Georgia, with the number unknown, police said. The California Highway Patrol issued an Amber Alert about the missing child for Santa Clara, San Mateo, San Francisco, Santa Cruz and Alameda counties.

8 people hurt in San Francisco apartment building fire

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Firefighters in San Francisco rescued 15 people and seven cats and dogs as flames ripped through an apartment building, officials said. Eight people suffered injuries in Saturday's blaze and four of them were hospitalized. The fire burned on the third and fourth floors of the building in the city's South of Market neighborhood, the fire department said. Fifteen apartments in the building were impacted, fire department spokesman Jonathan Baxter told SF Gate. The injured people were expected to recover and the rescued pets were all right, officials said. "Everyone and every pet will be okay," the fire department said on Twitter. The fire's cause is under investigation.

3 hurt after floor collapses during house party in Colorado

DENVER (AP)—Three people were taken to a hospital after a floor collapsed during a house party in a Denver area suburb, authorities said. South Metro Fire Rescue said crews responded Saturday at about 9:30 p.m. to the home southeast of Aurora, KUSA-TV reported. Firefighters said a portion of the first floor fell into the basement because of a party involving more than 100 people. Three people were injured, including one seriously, authorities said. No one was trapped. Firefighters did not identify the homeowners or those taken to the hospital. South Metro Fire Rescue said the collapse caused a natural gas leak, but it has since been shut off. The agency's Technical Rescue Team is working to stabilize the home.

Nearly half of Biden's 500M free COVID tests are still unclaimed

WASHINGTON (AP)—Nearly half of the 500 million free COVID-19 tests the Biden administration recently made available to the public still have not been claimed as virus cases plummet and people feel less urgency to test.

Wild demand swings have been a subplot in the pandemic, from vaccines to hand sanitizer, along with tests. On the first day of the White House test giveaway in January, COVIDtests.gov received over 45 million orders. Now officials say fewer than 100,000 orders a day are coming in for the packages of four free rapid tests per household, delivered by the U.S. Postal Service.

Still, the White House sees the program as a step toward a deeper, yet more elastic, testing infrastructure that will accommodate demand surges and remain on standby when cases wane. "We totally intend to sustain this market," Dr. Tom Inglesby, testing adviser to the COVID-19 response team, told The Associated Press. "We know the market is volatile and will come up and down with surges in variants."

The White House says Americans have placed 68 million orders for packages of tests, which leaves about 46% of the stock of tests still available to be ordered.

Testing will become more important with mask requirements now easing, say some independent experts. "If infection control is still our priority, testing is central," said Dr. Leana Wen, a former Baltimore health commissioner and commentator on the pandemic. "Four tests per household for one family will only last you one time. There should be enough tests for families to test twice a week."

Inglesby maintains that the pieces are falling into place to accommodate that.

Asia

Major flood hits Australia east coast, claiming 7 lives

AP

Boats and other debris are seen washed into the Milton ferry terminal on the Brisbane River in Brisbane, Australia, Monday, Feb. 28, 2022.

BRISBANE, Australia (AP)—Parts of Australia's third-most populous city Brisbane were under water Monday after heavy rain brought record flooding to some east coast areas and killed seven people.

The flooding in Brisbane and its surrounds is the worst since 2011 when the city of 2.6 million people was inundated by what was described as a once-in-a-century event.

A 59-year-old man drowned in Brisbane's north on Sunday afternoon after he tried to cross a flooded creek on foot and was pinned against a fence, Queensland state police said on Monday.

Queensland emergency services warned life-threatening flash flooding was occurring south of Brisbane in parts of Gold Coast city.

Residents were advised to shelter where they were unless it is unsafe to do so. Access to many areas was cut in multiple places, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services said in an alert.

Emergency crews made more than 100 swift-water rescues after receiving 8,000 calls for help in Brisbane and its surrounds since mid-afternoon Sunday, officials said.

All seven flood deaths have been in Queensland state, of which Brisbane is the capital. A search continues for a solo sailor, aged in his 70s, who fell overboard from his vessel in the Brisbane River near the city center on Saturday. Multiple emergency flood alerts were in place for Brisbane suburbs, where 2,145 homes and 2,356 businesses were submerged or would become so Monday as the waters rose. Another 10,827 properties will be partially flooded above the floorboards.

The waters were forecast to peak less than 50 centimeters (20 inches) below the 4.46 meter (14 foot, 3 inch) flood level reached in 2011, officials said.

ASIAN BRIEFS

North Korea says it tested cameras for spy satellite

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea said Monday it tested cameras to be installed on a spy satellite, with the announcement coming a day after after its neighbors detected a new ballistic missile launch. While North Korean state media didn't directly acknowledge any missile launch Sunday, it said the "important test" involved cameras for a reconnaissance satellite conducting vertical and oblique photography of a specific area of Earth. State media also released photos of the Korean Peninsula that appeared to be taken from space. Technical details of the North Korean statement couldn't be independently confirmed. But the statement suggests North Korea likely launched a rocket or a missile to take space-based photos.

Rescue underway after China mine collapse traps 14 workers

BEIJING (AP)—A rescue operation is underway to rescue 14 workers trapped in a coal mine in southwestern China, media reported Sunday. The roof of a shaft at Sanhe Shunxun coal mine in Guizhou province collapsed on Friday morning, state-run China Daily reported. More than 500 rescuers and over 80 emergency vehicles have been dispatched to the site, according to state broadcaster CCTV. The rescue operation has been challenging as the roof caved in about 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) from the entrance of the mine, and the collapsed area is considerably large.

Death toll from Indonesia earthquake rises to 11

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—Rescuers on Indonesia's Sumatra island retrieved more bodies Sunday from a strong earthquake two days ago, raising the death toll to 11 while another 400 were injured and thousands displaced. The body of the latest victim was recovered from the rubble of homes toppled by the magnitude 6.2 earthquake that shook West Sumatra province on Friday morning, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari. Six people died in Pasaman district and another five in neighboring West Pasaman district, he said. Rescuers were still searching for four villagers believed to be buried under tons of mud that tumbled down from the surrounding hills in Bukit Lintang village in Pasaman. Nearly 400 people were injured by the earthquake whose tremors were felt as far away as Malaysia and Singapore, and about 42 people were still receiving treatment, Muhari said.

World

A shelling, a young girl, and hopeless moment in Ukraine

MARIUPOL, Ukraine (AP)—In the port city of Mariupol, where Ukrainians are trying to fend off a Russian advance, an ambulance raced into a city hospital Sunday, carrying a 6-year-old girl mortally injured in Russian shelling.

She was pale. Her brown hair was pulled back with a rubber band. Her bloody pyjama pants were decorated with cartoon unicorns. She was brought in with her wounded father, his head bloodied and bandaged.

A medical team pumped her chest, fighting desperately to revive her. Her mother stood outside the ambulance, weeping.

"Take her out! Take her out! We can make it!" a hospital worker shouted, pushing a gurney to the ambulance.

The girl was raced inside and doctors and nurses huddled around her. One gave her an injection. Another tried to revive her with a defibrillator. A nurse wept. A doctor in blue medical scrubs, pumping oxygen into her, looked straight at the camera of an Associated Press videojournalist who had been allowed inside.

"Show this to Putin," he said angrily. "The eyes of this child, and crying doctors."

The girl, whose name was not immediately known, could not be saved. The doctor reached gently over her face to close her eyes.

Her body was left alone in the room, covered by her brightly colored polyester jacket, now spattered with blood.

AP

A woman reacts as paramedics perform CPR on a girl who was injured during shelling, at city hospital of Mariupol, eastern Ukraine, Sunday, Feb. 27, 2022. The girl did not survive.

Germany's move to help arm Ukraine signals historic shift

VIENNA (AP)—Germany's stunning decision to send anti-tank weapons and surface-to-air missiles to Ukraine—abandoning its long-held refusal to export weapons to conflict zones—is nothing less than a historic break with its post-World War II foreign policy.

"A new reality," Chancellor Olaf Scholz called it in an uncharacteristically rousing speech Sunday to a special session of parliament. The typically low-key Chancellor Scholz said Russia's invasion of Ukraine required a dramatically different response from Germany than in the past.

"With his invasion of Ukraine on Thursday, President Putin created a new reality," Scholz told the Bundestag, his speech repeatedly greeted by applause, particularly his condemnations of the Russian leader. "This reality demands a clear answer. We've given one."

Scholz said Germany is sending anti-tank weapons and surface-to-air missiles to Ukraine. He also said the country is committing 100 billion euros ($113 billion) to a special fund for its armed forces and will raise its defense spending above 2 percent of GDP, a measure on which it had long lagged.

Germany's about-face served as a potent example of just how fundamentally Russia's war in Ukraine is reshaping Europe's post-World War II security policy.

Germany's foreign policy has long been characterized by a strong aversion to the use of military force, an approach German politicians explain as rooted in its history of military aggression against its neighbors during the 20th century.

While a strong U.S. ally and NATO member, post-war Germany has attempted to maintain good ties with Moscow, a policy also driven by business interests and Germany's energy needs.

"Many of the things that Olaf Scholz said would have been unthinkable even months ago," said Marcel Dirsus, a nonresident fellow at the University of Kiel's Institute for Security Policy. "It's become very clear that Russia has simply gone too far, and as a result, Germany is now waking up."

Still, until this weekend, the German government had balked at sending weapons to Ukraine, even as it faced growing international criticism for its hesitation.

But then, a series of announcements starting Saturday evening rocked traditional notions of German policy.

It began with word from the government that it would allow the shipment of 400 German-made anti-tank weapons from the Netherlands to Ukraine, something it had thus far refused to do.

Shortly afterwards, the chancellor's office went further and said it would send its own weapons, including 1,000 anti-tank weapons and 500 "Stinger" surface-to-air missiles, directly to Ukraine. It also committed to targeted bans on Russian banks from the SWIFT global financial system, which German leaders had expressed reluctance to do.

Overdrive

Get to know the 2022 TRD Toyota Tundra

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

"For the first couple of months, the TRD Toyota Tundra off road package will be our standard package and we made sure that it is well suited and equipped for everybody," said Atkins Krol Inc sales manager Kevin Barnes.
BEA CABRERA

If you read our Feb. 25, 2022, edition, then you'd already be familiar with the 2022 edition of the TRD Toyota Tundra, when we introduced it to the CNMI public. Yes, the 2022 TRD Toyota Tundra is now available on Saipan and you can check it out at the Atkins-Kroll Toyota showroom in San Jose.

Twenty-two years since its initial launch, the 2022 edition of the TRD Toyota Tundra will amaze you but if you need more convincing, here are five reasons why you should head out to the dealer today.

Out with the V8 engine and in with the V6 twin turbo engine.

According to Atkins Kroll Inc. sales manager Kevin Barnes, the V6 engine may be smaller in size than the V8, but it has the two twin turbo that optimizes efficiency and allows smooth air travel inside the engine which gives it more horsepower. This V6 3.4-liter twin turbo engine actually comes with 389 horsepower, which is very, very strong and it comes with 479 lbs of torque "so it's an improvement over the larger V8 engine," Barnes said.

"With a powerful engine, the towing ability has gone up as well. From 10,000 lbs of towing capability before, now it has gone up to 12,000 lbs. Now one can tow pretty big boats, trailers, equipment, etc. as this Tundra is built for that," he added.

With gas prices rising, Barnes said that part of the Tundra's transition from V8 to V6 is fuel efficiency. "So, what was normally 14 to 15 miles per gallon on the V8 engine is now 18 miles per gallon city driving and 24 miles per gallon on the highway. On average, it uses about 21 miles per gallon, which is amazing for a vehicle this size," Barnes said.

New and improved exterior

When you see it, you know it is the new Tundra right away. It still has that wide, strong, and muscular look that is staple of a Tundra, but the 2022 Tundra is armed with a new grille with dark chrome accents in front that completes its solid stance compared to other trucks. The protruding fender looks like chiseled muscles, the stepper looks like it is made of a granite slab, and the headlights and tailgate lights use LED for efficiency and better visibility, especially when driving off road and when hauling. It looks like a souped-up Terminator or Transformer.

This Tundra comes with what's called "towing mirrors," which is beneficial because it gives you a wider view, and has auto-folding so it can stick our even more. When you turn the car off, the mirrors will automatically fold in and when you turn the engine on, it will automatically fold out.

"If you are towing, say a boat or trailer that is a little longer than usual, these towing mirrors will give a longer field view and, of course, with the LED lights, your surrounding will be illuminated," Barnes said.

Big technology improvements as well

When it comes to the latest technology, there's a lot of new additions as well. It has an eight-inch multi-display touch screen and about five times faster than it used to be. The new Tundra now comes with wireless Apple Car Play and Android Auto.

"The Tundra is the first of our Toyota to have this connection wirelessly and eventually all of the Toyota models will have it," Barnes said.

The multi-display screen mirrors your phone, which means everything you have on your phone, the display on screen will have it. "I can check my messages, go to Pandora to play my favorite music or WhatsApp, make a call or answer a call as the screen has an interactive setting just like your iPhone to allow you to speak while you drive," he said.

The 2022 TRD Toyota Tundra comes with a "Crawl Control" package, which is described as a multi-terrain system that automatically adjusts the throttle and brakes on five low-speed settings so the driver can focus on steering.

"The Crawl Control is useful when you get stuck in terrain that is unfavorable. If you ever find yourself slipping on the terrain, mud, or digging into the sand, just turn the Crawl Control knob and the computer will automatically take over and it will get you out of any situation that you've dug yourself into," Barnes said. "A normal driver, no matter how good they are, will not be able to control the wheels enough to drive themselves out. But the computer can and it will identify which tire needs to spin and it will rock itself out, tire by tire rotating them as needed and help dig you out of any situation. No need to put your foot on the gas or the brake because all you have to do is guide it with a steering wheel and the truck will do the rest. …The vehicle's computer is so smart that it will be able to do that for you."

This Tundra also has the "trailer backup guide with straight path assist" where sensor cameras help the driver position in a straight line as they back up and the panoramic view monitor cameras will give the driver a 360-degree view of the vehicle outside—a big help when towing or hauling a load. The Tundra makes driving safe for pedestrians, bikers, and other cars and to the driver and passengers.

Impressive suspension features

In the series of the Toyota Tundra, the 2022 model is the first to have the "adaptive variable suspension" feature that is responsive to different road conditions—rain, dry, rocks, potholes, sand, and mud—whether happening separately or one after the other. The built-in actuators maintain the smooth, quiet, and stable ride.

When towing, the rear air suspension adjusts according to the weight of the load being towed. Do not let the aggressive exterior of the Tundra fool you because these impressive suspension features will give you a smooth drive.

"It's basically the reason why they picked the name Tundra for this Toyota full-size vehicle. It is because Tundra is synonymous with very harsh environment, hard to live in conditions, just really demanding conditions. That takes a lot of strength and this vehicle is perfect to get you through it as the Tundra is strong, being the longest lasting and most reliable vehicle on the road," Barnes said.

Worry-free maintenance

Barnes said any new or used Toyota purchased from Atkins Kroll Inc. now come with a "Signature Care Package."

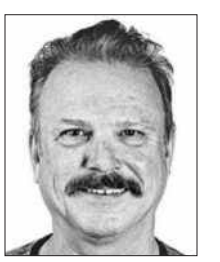
"This means that we are covering the first three years of service. That includes free service maintenance and change oil. We use higher grade synthetic oil, which allows the vehicle to go up to 10,000 miles which, on average, is about how far people will drive in a year," Barnes said. "Even if you are paying for that on your own, it still stretches the budget 10 times. …Really, most people will be more than halfway done with their auto loan before they have to pay for their first oil change. With the Signature Care Package, the maintenance of the Tundra will be less of an expense."

For the first couple of months, the TRD Toyota Tundra off-road package will be Atkins-Kroll Inc.'s standard package "and we made sure that it is well-suited and equipped for everybody. There will be higher trim levels coming in the future and followed by a full-size Tundra hybrid shortly," Barnes said.

For more information, visit Atkins Kroll Inc. along Chalan Monsignor Guerrero Road from 8am to 5pm Monday to Saturday or call the sales department at (670) 234-5911.

MOTORMOUTH: Do I need power steering fluid?

By BOB WEBER
Chicago Tribune



Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. He maintains this status by seeking certification every five years. Weber's work appears in professional trade magazines and other consumer publications. His writing also appears in automotive trade publications, Consumer Guide and Consumers Digest. *Send questions along with name and town to Motormouth, Rides, Chicago Tribune, 160 N. Stetson Ave., Fourth Floor, Chicago, IL 60601 or motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.*

Q: Recently I had my oil changed on my 2018 Honda Accord Touring and, on the receipt of services rendered, the power steering fluid box was crossed out. I assume that meant it didn't apply. I researched a little and saw it has "electric" power steering. But I found conflicting info. One place said there is fluid, and it should be changed every 75,000 miles, but the owner's manual doesn't mention power steering fluid.

A: There is no fluid. Instead of a hydraulic pump and fluid, there is an electric motor providing the assist.

Q: I have a 2009 Chevy Cobalt that has the alloy wheels. I have lost two of the center caps on two of the wheels. I have seen other Cobalts in my area that are also missing a center cap. Just wondering if the caps tend to fall off over time or is someone stealing them off the car.

A: Wheel center caps commonly lose their grip over the years. They are not worth stealing. However, you can find replacement caps. If you shop around, you will find generic caps and others with logos such as BMW, Cadillac, American flags and more. They may not be a perfect fit, but you might be able to modify them. Wouldn't it be cool if your car appears to have Maserati wheels?

Q: How much does it cost to recharge an electric car? I know it depends on the price of a kilowatt-hour, but I have never seen a comparison to a tank of gas, which depends on the cost per gallon. Is the industry purposely hiding this from us?

A: The price per kilowatt-hour (KWH) is a major factor and many utility companies' rates vary by time of day (e.g., lower at night) and even the time of year (e.g., higher in summer). Power companies may even offer special EV rates. It may cost $20-40 per week to charge a car. This does not include the price for a home charger and its installation. Rates per minute at public charging stations vary and usually include a connection fee. Compare your miles traveled and price per gallon of gas.

Q: I have a 2021 Ram pickup with a V6 engine and an 8-speed transmission. It only gets 18 mpg on the highway. What can I do to increase mileage?

A: The estimated, yes estimated, fuel economy is 19 mpg in the city and 24 mpg on the highway. As they say, "your mileage may vary." Do you religiously zero the fuel economy readout every time you hit the road? There are many other variables to consider. Do you carry an antique anvil collection? Do you have a lead foot? Is there a greater gravity in Minnesota? Do I have a good answer? No.

Q: My daughter has a 2017 Hyundai Elantra with aluminum rims. She has had to buy two rims recently at a cost of $600 each because the rims had gotten bent. Her dealer told her that she could not get steel rims for her car. I don't think that is true. But I cannot prove it. Is that true?

A: If the car has 16-inch or 17-inch wheels, there are no steel replacements of which I am aware. There is an alternative to new wheels from Hyundai: reconditioned wheels. They are often about half the price of new ones.

Life & Style

‘CODA’ takes top honors at SAG Awards, Will Smith wins

By JAKE COYLE
AP FILM WRITER

In an upset, the deaf family drama “CODA” took top honors at an unpredictable and history-making 28th Screen Actors Guild Awards that also saw wins for the leads of “Squid Game,” the cast of “Ted Lasso” and Will Smith.

The ceremony, held Sunday at Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, California, and broadcast on both TNT and TBS, was notably border-breaking, with historic wins for deaf actors, Korean stars and some of Hollywood’s biggest names. It culminated with “CODA,” Sian Heder’s heartwarming Apple TV+ coming-of-age film featuring a trio of deaf actors in Marlee Matlin, Troy Kotsur and Daniel Durant, along with newcomer Emilia Jones, winning best ensemble. The film has been seen as a watershed moment for the deaf community in Hollywood.

“This validates the fact that we, deaf actors, can work just like anybody else. We look forward to more opportunities for deaf actors,” said Matlin on stage before teaching the crowd sign language for “I love you.”

Matlin is the only deaf actor to win an Oscar, but her “CODA” co-star, Kotsur, may be in line to join her. Kotsur won best supporting actor Sunday, becoming the first deaf actor win an individual SAG award. When his name was read, the 53-year-old veteran actor plunged his head into his hands. On stage, he thanked his wife for “reminding me to check my fly before walking the red carpet.”

Netflix’s “Squid Game,” the first non-English language series nominated by the actors guild, came on strong with three awards, including Lee Jung-jae for best male actor in a drama series and Jung Ho-yeon for best female actor in a drama series. Those wins came over the likes of “Succession” stars Brian Cox and Jeremy Strong, and Reese Witherspoon and Jennifer Aniston of “The Morning Show.”

AP

The cast of “Coda” accepts the award for outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture and signs “I love you” at the 28th annual

Tom Holland and ‘Uncharted’ stay No. 1 at box office

NEW YORK (AP)—For the eighth time in the last two and a half months, a movie starring Tom Holland is No. 1 at the box office.

The Sony Pictures videogame adaptation “Uncharted,” starring Holland and Mark Wahlberg, led ticket sales for its second weekend of release with $23.3 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

“Uncharted” held well, too, dropping a modest 46% from its $44 million debut. In two weeks, it’s made $83.4 million in U.S. and Canadian theaters.

“Uncharted,” a long-in-development adventure film about lost treasure that cost $120 million to make, is packing theaters overseas, too. With a mid-March China release date still looming, “Uncharted” added $35 million overseas, bringing its worldwide gross to $226.4 million so far.

The film’s robust international sales includes box office from Russia, where studios have thus far elected to keep movies in release after the country invaded Ukraine earlier in the week. The Ukrainian Film Academy on Saturday called for a boycott of the Russian film industry following the invasion.

On the heels of the blockbuster business for “Spider-Man: No Way Home,” the success of “Uncharted” has minted the expanding star power of the 25-year-old Holland. “No Way Home,” which led the box office six times over December and January, is still one of the top draws in theaters. This weekend, it landed in third place with $5.8 million, edging it closer to $800 million in domestic ticket sales.

While both “Uncharted” and “Spider-Man: No Way Home” have benefitted from brand recognition, rarely has one movie star reigned so much over a 12-week span in theaters.

Star power, too, has kept the Channing Tatum-led “Dog” at the number two spot. The MGM release, which Tatum co-directed with Reid Carolin, declined just 32% with $10.1 million in its second weekend of release. So far, the film—in which Tatum plays an Army Ranger paired with an Army dog on a road trip—has made $30.9 million against a $15 million budget.

With the release of Warner Bros.’ “The Batman” coming on Friday, few new wide releases opened in theaters—and the ones that did struggled to make an impression.

The Foo Fighters’ horror-comedy “Studio 666,” released by Open Road and Briarcliff Entertainment, went the widest, opening in 2,306 theaters. The movie, starring Dave Grohl and company as themselves while making their 10th record in a haunted house, debuted with $1.5 million.

The repeated delayed “Cyrano,” starring Peter Dinklage, launched in 797 theaters and totaled $1.4 million for MGM. The musical, directed by Joe Wright, has been warmly received by critics, might have benefitted from a boost in Oscar nominations, but after several major Golden Globe nominations, it landed only a nod for costume design.

The new release that performed best is five decades old. Paramount’s 50th anniversary, remastered release of Francis Ford Coppola’s “The Godfather” debuted with $900,000 in 156 theaters.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. “Uncharted,” $23.3 million.
2. “Dog,” $10.1 million.
3. “Spider-Man: No Way Home,” $5.8 million.
4. “Death on the Nile,” $4.5 million.
5. “Jackass Forever,” $3.2 million.
6. “Sing 2,” $2.1 million.
7. “Marry Me,” $1.9 million.
8. “Studio 666,” $1.6 million.
9. “Cyrano,” $1.4 million.
10. “Scream,” $1.3 million.

Costs quickly adding up for wedding participant

DEAR ABBY: I couldn’t be happier for my friends who are embarking on the next chapter of their lives with their partners, but I’m becoming increasingly anxious about their bachelorette parties. When did the bachelorette party become such a big production? While I have attended my fair share, I think they are getting increasingly extravagant and pricey.

I’m trying to prioritize my own next step in life, which is buying a home, and it feels like I’m being “invited” to spend a significant chunk of my savings over the course of a few months. (The weddings themselves will require significant travel.)

The bachelorette party I’m most concerned about is for a wedding in which I have been asked to be a bridesmaid. For this reason, I feel obligated to attend. The cost associated with the weekend is $2,500 per person and will total $20,000 for three days. This equals three months of rent for me, and I’m finding it hard to justify this kind of expense. I get anxious thinking about the other expenses—flights, accommodations, gifts— and time-off requests from work.

My first instinct is to say “No,” but it’s hard to refuse a bride who is so important to me. I want to be supportive and involved during this exciting time for her. How much is too much? What is the proper etiquette for being in the wedding party and attending the bachelorette party? Should I have asked about this before accepting to be in the bridal party?

DEAR ANXIOUS ATTENDANT: Yes, you should have asked the bride before accepting her invitation to join the wedding party. And it is not too late to speak up. Contrary to popular belief, bachelorette parties and weddings do NOT “go together like a horse and carriage.” TALK with your friend. Explain that all of the costs (travel, outfit and wedding gift) are more than you can afford. If you do, she may tell you it’s enough that you travel to and participate in the wedding. However, if she doesn’t, back out so she can replace you.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: My husband, who is in his 60s, wears a baseball cap all day, every day, to hide a bald spot on the back of his head. He has worn that same dirty cap for two years and even wears it to work. He wears it in the house and only removes it when he is sleeping. I have suggested he wash it or replace it, but he refuses and he makes a tsk-tsk noise when I tell him I don’t think it’s healthy to wear something filthy on your head for two years.

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

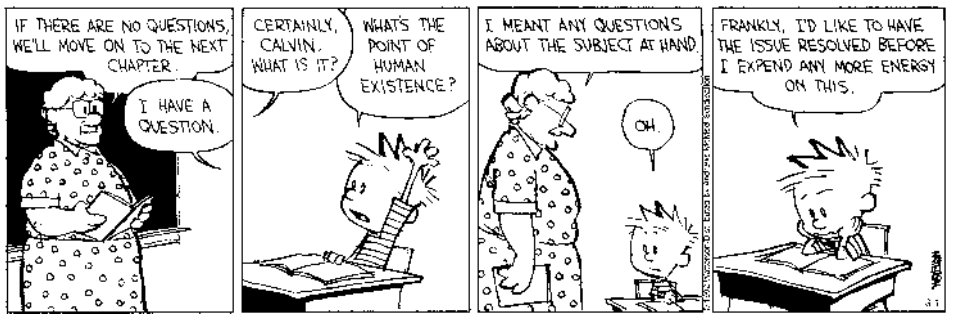
DISGUSTED IN FLORIDA

DEAR DISGUSTED: You are correct; it isn’t healthy. According to the Cleveland Clinic, moderate exposure to sunlight increases vitamin D levels in the body, which is not only beneficial to good health, but it also encourages hair growth. Your husband is doing himself no favors by constantly wearing that (dirty) baseball cap, especially indoors. If he does it because he’s self-conscious about his bald spot, there are products that can minimize it, and effective surgical options if he would be willing to spend the money.

Pastimes

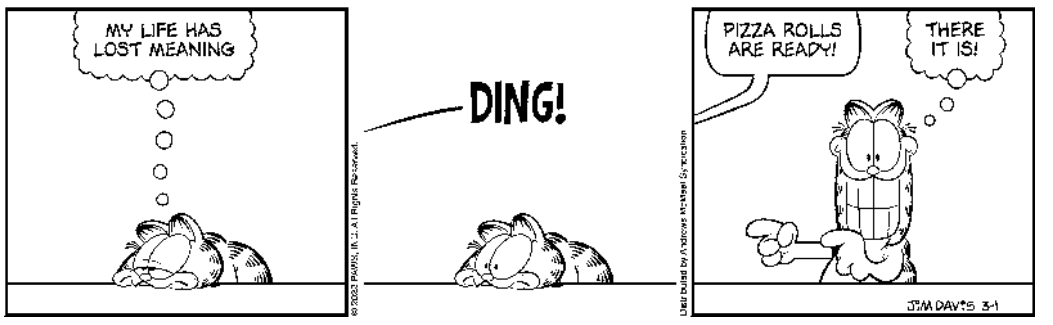
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


IF THERE ARE NO QUESTIONS, WE'LL MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER.
I HAVE A QUESTION.
CERTAINLY, CALVIN. WHAT IS IT?
WHAT'S THE POINT OF HUMAN EXISTENCE?
I MEANT ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SUBJECT AT HAND.
OH.
FRANKLY, I'D LIKE TO HAVE THE ISSUE RESOLVED BEFORE I EXPEND ANY MORE ENERGY ON THIS.

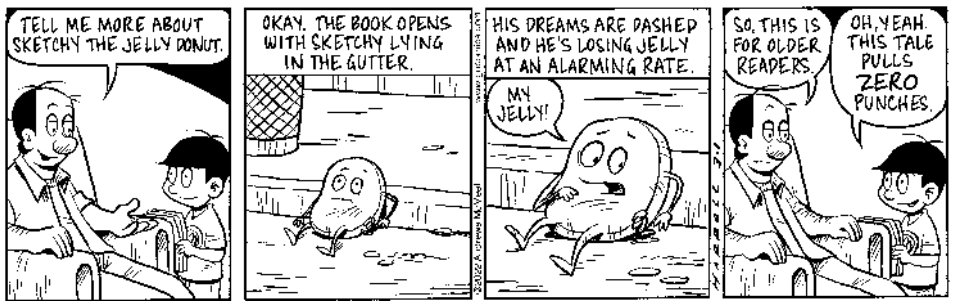
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


TELL ME MORE ABOUT SKETCHY THE JELLY DONUT.
OKAY. THE BOOK OPENS WITH SKETCHY LYING IN THE GUTTER.
HIS DREAMS ARE DASHED AND HE'S LOSING JELLY AT AN ALARMING RATE.
MY JELLY!
SO, THIS IS FOR OLDER READERS.
OH, YEAH. THIS TALE PULLS ZERO PUNCHES.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

BARK BARK ARF ARF ARF BARK BARK BARK ARF
YAP YAP BARK BARK ARF ARF ARF BARK ARF
THERE YOU GO. THE LACK OF A REBUTTAL PROVES MY ARGUMENT IS SOUND.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

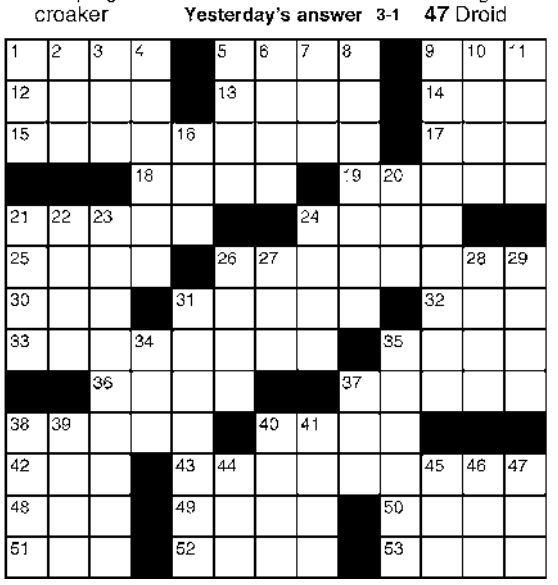
ACROSS
1 Body powder
5 Stare stupidly
9 Cyndi Lauper's "— Bop"
12 Petri dish gel
13 Actor Epps
14 Asian holiday
15 Politician's supporters
17 Remote batteries, often
18 Blog entry
19 Cheerful
21 Stitched
24 High-five sound
25 Mark Harmon TV series
26 Ontario neighbor
30 Web address
31 Quinn of "Elementary"
32 Triumphed
33 Jumping croaker
35 Compass point
36 Skin opening
37 "Thank you, Henri"
38 Japanese city
40 Pleased
42 Despondent
43 Forceful takeover
48 Luau instrument
49 Crunchy cookie
50 Franc replacement
51 Mal de —
52 Ivy League team
53 Plane reservation

DOWN
1 Spigot
2 Previously
3 Attorney's profession
4 Thin pancakes
5 Oodles
6 Latin 101 word
7 "Now, where — I?"
8 Citadel of Moscow
9 Celeb's magnetism
10 Get wind of
11 Online crafts site
16 Scepter
20 Dig in
21 Rebuff
22 Off-white
23 Self-control
24 Unforeseen problem
26 Swampy terrain
27 Hubbub
28 Pear type
29 Con
31 Miriam Makeba's music
34 Parcel of land
35 Pizza slices
37 Ruin the veneer
38 Model Heidi
39 Oxen's burden
40 Broadway's Verdon
41 Boxer Spinks
44 Metal source
45 Paris street
46 Coach Parseghian
47 Droid

Solution time: 22 mins.

F	R	A	T	■	F	B	I	■	J	E	E	R
R	E	P	U	B	L	I	C	■	O	G	R	E
O	V	E	R	B	A	■	E	■	R	A	I	■
■	■	■	B	A	G	■	S	Y	D	N	E	Y
P	A	G	A	N	■	I	K	E	A	■	■	■
I	R	A	N	■	S	P	A	W	N	F	D	■
C	A	R	■	S	T	A	T	S	■	D	O	C
■	B	R	O	C	A	D	E	■	A	G	R	A
■	■	■	N	A	G	S	■	G	L	E	A	N
A	L	T	U	M	N	■	Y	O	U	■	■	■
A	L	A	S	■	A	H	O	Y	M	A	I	E
R	E	N	E	■	T	U	R	A	N	D	O	T
P	E	G	S	■	E	T	E	■	A	S	E	A

Yesterday's answer 3-1



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Justin Bieber, 28; Kesha, 35; Lupita Nyong'o, 39; Ron Howard, 68.

Happy Birthday: Sit on all information you receive until you verify what's coming down the pipeline. Speaking too quickly will lead to conflicts and errors. Listen carefully, follow the dots, and focus on performance, presentation and building a strong base. Refuse to let anyone pressure you into anything; time is on your side, so use it to your benefit. Your numbers are 4, 10, 18, 25, 33, 44, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Have patience; if you act quickly, mistakes will happen. Keep your plans a secret until you can confidently present what you have to offer. Don't expect to win over someone who prefers to run the show. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* A clear head is required when dealing with others. Be a good listener, and you'll come across information that can help you make positive suggestions and a difference. An act of kindness will give others a bird's-eye view regarding what you can do. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Concentrate on what's important to you, and refuse to let anyone lure you off course. An adamant approach to the way you use your skills and knowledge will deter interference and encourage you to do the best job possible. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Stick to what you know and do best. Look on the bright side and use your skills uniquely, and you'll come out on top. A partnership will be a learning experience that leads to growth and long-term happiness. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Don't let an outsider mess with your plans. Stick close to those who have your back, and you will outmaneuver anyone who gets in your way. Be aware of others' changes, but don't feel obligated to follow suit. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* You have plenty to look forward to, so don't waste time worrying about something you cannot change. Plant your feet firmly on the ground, and be the one to make a difference. Follow your heart, and something good will unfold. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Mental stimulation will help you stay out of trouble. Avoid arguments. Embrace reading, learning and finding out the truth. Once you have evidence to substantiate your beliefs, you can move forward. Trust in facts, not hearsay. Focus on self-improvement. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Talk little and pursue action that encourages positive results. How you go about putting changes in play will make a difference to the outcome. Don't guess when your success depends on accuracy, know-how and skill. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Live and learn. Listen carefully, and refuse to let your emotions get in the way of a good decision. Don't believe everything you hear. An exaggerated statement will lead to assumptions and a costly outcome. Know when to say no. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Reorganize how you handle money matters and how you approach work, titles and living conditions. A positive change will make a massive difference in how you feel and how you incorporate new beginnings. Romance is on the rise. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Don't feel you have to make a statement or change because of what someone decides to do; focus on what's important to you and move along. Trust your instincts, not what others try to lead you to believe. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* It's OK to change your mind. When in doubt, don't worry about taking a step back and assessing the situation. Draw on your resources and the people you trust, and you'll find the path best suited to your needs. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are curious, determined and visionary. You are dedicated and friendly.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	1		2			7	5	
6				5		9		1
3	2							
			7		8			2
	6						4	
4			9		6			
							8	7
7		2		8				4
	5	3			7		9	

Difficulty Level ★★ 3/01

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

2	7	9	3	8	6	1	4	5
4	8	6	9	1	5	3	2	7
1	3	5	4	7	2	6	8	9
5	1	8	2	9	3	4	7	6
9	6	2	8	4	7	5	1	3
7	4	3	5	6	1	2	9	8
6	9	1	7	5	4	8	3	2
8	2	4	6	3	9	7	5	1
3	5	7	1	2	8	9	6	4

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

BAUBLES Solution: 10 letters

G	L	A	S	S	M	A	L	L	T	N	A	I	G	K
G	L	I	T	Z	E	L	C	I	C	I	R	L	N	C
S	S	I	C	S	E	N	O	T	S	A	I	I	I	A
Y	E	D	D	O	L	L	S	T	E	T	C	E	G	R
A	L	M	A	I	L	E	B	L	T	K	U	E	N	C
D	G	D	E	E	N	O	C	E	K	S	R	R	A	M
I	N	I	M	H	B	G	R	N	A	G	I	G	H	I
L	A	T	A	J	T	I	A	S	E	U	O	I	C	G
O	D	N	E	O	N	C	J	R	R	M	T	L	S	A
H	C	C	E	G	K	A	A	O	N	T	G	I	D	U
E	T	H	O	L	D	I	Z	C	U	I	L	F	F	D
X	L	L	I	R	F	A	Z	K	L	V	S	O	N	Y
T	E	V	L	E	V	I	G	T	E	W	O	H	S	Y
R	E	T	P	E	C	S	R	R	O	O	D	T	U	O
A	D	O	R	N	M	E	N	T	E	K	N	I	R	T

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Adornment, Beads, Beautify, Bijou, Clear, Colors, Curio, Dangles, Dolls, Enhance, Extra, Filigree, Frill, Gadget, Garnish, Gauc, Giant, Gilt, Gimcrack, Glass, Gliding, Glittering, Glitz, Gold, Hanging, Hold, Holidays, Icicle, Jazz, Knickknack, Little, Mini, Mugs, Object, Outdoor, Rock, Scepter, Show, Silver, Small, Stones, Themes, Toy, Trifle, Trinket, Velvet

Yesterday's Answer: Historical

To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 50, 51 and 53 through 66, order online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Joel Embiid, James Harden help 76ers beat Knicks, 125-109

NEW YORK (AP)— Joel Embiid and James Harden were greeted by loud roars from the plenty of Philadelphia fans that packed Madison Square Garden.

The cheers later turned to groans as one foul after another threatened to make the matinee last deep into the afternoon.

Embiid didn't care how it looked to viewers. All that matters is how his partnership with Harden looks to him.

"Unstoppable," he said.

Embiid scored 37 points and made a career and NBA season-high 23 free throws, Harden had 29 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds, and the 76ers made it two straight wins with their new duo by beating the New York Knicks 125-109 on Sunday.

The 76ers made 39 free throws, most in the NBA this season, and almost all their work to break open a close game midway through the fourth quarter came from the line. Embiid finished 23 of 27 on free throws and the NBA's leading scorer added nine rebounds.

It was the opener of a home-and-home series, with the game Wednesday to be Harden's first in front of his home fans.

"Tonight felt like we were in Philly," Harden said. "But that crowd, it's going to be turned (up) in there and I'm ready for it."

After a powerful performance in a 133-102 win at Minnesota on Friday in Harden's 76ers debut, this one became a grind-it-out game that the 76ers handled better. It was tied at 100 in the fourth, but Philadelphia pulled away by scoring 10 of its next 12 at the line. Embiid made six free throws, Harden four, and the only 76ers basket during that stretch came when Harden fed Embiid on the fast break.

Once Embiid fouled out both opposing centers and the Knicks were forced to play small, the 76ers put Harden and Embiid in the pick-and-roll.

AP

Philadelphia 76ers' Joel Embiid, left, and James Harden, right, look to head coach Doc Rivers during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the New York Knicks Sunday, Feb. 27, 2022, in New York.

"So now you're rolling the big guy down the middle and it's really difficult to come help and that's when we got him rolling and getting all those fouls," 76ers coach Doc Rivers said.

Harden added five steals and matched his season best in assists.

RJ Barrett and Evan Fournier each scored 24 points for the Knicks, who have lost five straight and nine of 10. Julius Randle had 16 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists.

Embiid scored 34 and Harden had 27 points and 12 assists Friday in the All-Star guard's first game since the 76ers acquired the 10-time All-Star and Paul Millsap for Ben Simmons, Seth Curry, Andre Drummond and two future first-round picks in a Feb. 10 trade.

Harden and Embiid combined to score Philadelphia's first 11 points. Harden made a 3-pointer that gave the Sixers a 38-35 lead after one.\

But the pace eventually slowed down, with Rivers seeing all the fouls and saying to himself: "This game's going to be a while."

The teams combined to commit 50 fouls. Philadelphia finished 39 of 44 at the line and New York was 22 for 35.

"They shot 40-whatever it was, a ton of free throws, and we shot a lot," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "So there was no flow to the game, so that hurts you some."

Mavericks 107, arriors 101

In San Francisco, Luka Doncic made two free throws with 7.9 seconds left on the way to 34 points and Dallas came back from 21 down in the third quarter to stun Golden State.

Spencer Dinwiddie scored 10 of his 24 points in the final period for Dallas.

Stephen Curry hit a 3-pointer with 10 seconds remaining and had 27 points and 10 assists in his first game at home since earning All-Star Game MVP honors, but the Warriors couldn't do enough right on either end during crunch time as Dallas hit all the big shots.

Doncic went 10 for 21 from the floor in the first of two matchups in five days between a pair of top-five NBA defenses: No. 1 Golden State and the fifth-ranked Mavericks. Dinwiddie scored five straight points midway through the fourth that got Dallas to 93-90.

Golden State's Klay Thompson sat out with an illness after missing practice Saturday.

Jazz 118, Suns 114

In Phoenix, Donovan Mitchell scored 26 points, Rudy Gobert added 16 points and 14 rebounds and Utah beat NBA-leading Phoenix.

Utah has won eight of nine to improve to 38-22. Phoenix, at 49-12, has lost back-to-back games for the first time in two months. Before the two losses, the Suns had won eight straight and 19 of 20.

Phoenix has played its past three games without All-Star point guard Chris Paul. He broke his thumb on Feb. 16 and could be out the rest of the regular season.

Devin Booker led Phoenix with 30 points. The Suns had a chance to tie it in the final seconds, but Jae Crowder threw the ball out of bounds.

Pelicans 139, Lakers 117

In Los Angeles, CJ McCollum scored 22 points, Jonas Valanciunas and Brandon Ingram added 19 apiece and New Orleans rolled past reeling Los Angeles.

The 28-point margin of victory is the largest in franchise history by the Pelicans over the Lakers, surpassing their 139-117 win in 2018. New Orleans has won five straight road games, marking the fifth time that has happened since the team moved from Charlotte in 2002.

LeBron James led the Lakers with 32 points. Los Angeles has dropped two straight and five of its last six to fall a season-worst six games under .500 at 27-33.

Pacers 128, Celtics 107

In Indianapolis, Oshae Brissett scored 27 points and Buddy Hield had 11 of his 21 points in the final eight minutes to help Indiana beat Boston.

Brissett made a career-high six 3-pointers and the Pacers finished with 17. Tyrese Haliburton had 22 points and nine assists for Indiana.

Jayson Tatum had 24 points for Boston. Jaylen Brown added 23.

Pistons 127, Hornets 126, OT

In Charlotte, N.C., Kelly Olynyk made a fadeaway jumper from the baseline at the overtime buzzer and Detroit beat Charlotte for the first time nearly 4 1/2 years.

Saddiq Bey had 28 points and eight rebounds for Detroit, Jerami Grant added 26 points and Olynyk finished with 20 points and eight rebounds. The Pistons had lost 15 games to the Hornets since their last win on Oct. 18, 2017.

Terry Rozier had 33 points for Charlotte. The Hornets are 0-6 in overtime.

Clippers 99, Rockets 98

In Houston, Reggie Jackson scored 26 points, including three key points down the stretch to lead the Los Angeles Clippers to a 99-98 victory over the Houston Rockets on Sunday night to open a two-game series.

Jackson's jumper with about 90 seconds left put the Clippers up 97-95.

Garrison Mathews had 17 points for Houston, and Dennis Schroder added 11 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds. The Rockets have lost nine straight and 13 of 14.

Nuggets 124, Trail Blazers 92

In Portland, Ore., JaMychal Green had 20 points and 10 rebounds off the bench and the Denver Nuggets pushed their winning streak to six games with a 124-92 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers on Sunday night.

Nikola Jokic had 18 rebounds, 11 assists and eight points before sitting for good with 2:22 left in the third quarter.

DeMarcus Cousins, signed by the Nuggets for the rest of the season on Friday, added 19 points and eight rebounds, and Denver's bench finished with a season-high 76 points.

"We've got a lot of talented guys in that second unit," said Bryn Forbes, who finished with 17 points. "A lot of guys can come in and get hot, put up some points and help us win games."

Anfernee Simons had 16 points to lead the Trail Blazers, who were coming off a loss to the Warriors on Thursday that snapped a four-game winning streak.

Close East race adds to Bucks' urgency coming out of break

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo and the defending champion Milwaukee Bucks are coming out of the All-Star break knowing they've got work ahead just to earn home-court advantage in the first round of the playoffs.

Such is life in the Eastern Conference, where only 5 1/2 games separate the top seven teams.

"I just feel like if you lose one game, you go from third to fifth," Bucks forward Bobby Portis said Friday. "If you win two games, you go from fifth to second. Just try to string together four or five good games and hopefully put ourselves in good position to be right where we want to be."

The Bucks (36-24) entered the weekend fourth in the East, only three games behind the conference-leading Chicago Bulls but just 2 ½ games ahead of the seventh-place Toronto Raptors. The Bucks play their first game since the All-Star break Saturday when they host the Brooklyn Nets.

Milwaukee understands that seeding means only so much in the postseason.

The Bucks lost in the Eastern Conference finals in 2019 and fell in the second round in 2020 despite having the NBA's best regular-season record both years, though the bubble format of the 2020 postseason prevented them from having a home-court advantage. They were the No. 3 seed in the East last season and won their first title in half a century.

"I think we have a great team," Antetokounmpo, the two-time NBA MVP, said during the All-Star Game festivities. "We're in a good place. We've got to keep building our chemistry, keep coming together, building good habits. Every year there are five, six teams that have a chance to win the championship. As long as you're there, that's all you can ask for."

The standings suggest there might be that many teams in the East with reason to believe they could make the NBA Finals. The Bucks realize the depth in the East this year could make their playoff position more important.

Not only do the Bucks need a late-season surge to assure themselves of a home-court advantage in the first round, they also want to avoid falling below sixth place and landing in the play-in games to determine the East's seventh and eighth playoff teams.

"I've never seen a playoff race this close from top to bottom," All-Star forward Khris Middleton said. "Nobody really wants to go into that play-in game. You want to make the playoffs, but nobody wants to be in that play-in game situation. You can expect all teams to be in playoff mode from here on out, if it didn't start before the All-Star break. We all know what's at stake."

Milwaukee has struggled with consistency while dealing with a variety of injuries, most notably the back problem that has sidelined Brook Lopez since the season opener.

The Bucks have boasted one of the league's best defenses since coach Mike Budenholzer's arrival in 2018, but the Bucks haven't been quite as effective on that side of the floor without their 7-footer.

Lopez underwent surgery Dec. 2 and rejoined practice this week, but the Bucks still aren't saying when he might be ready to play again. They do expect him back at some point this season, though they acquired Serge Ibaka at the trade deadline to add some frontcourt insurance.

"He's definitely missed," guard Jrue Holiday said of Lopez. "I don't think he gets enough credit. I'll definitely give him the credit. What he does for us in so many ways – defensively, offensively – the way he takes care of us at the rim on both sides of the floor."

The Bucks know they must play better to have a chance at repeating. The schedule will test them as they get ready for the postseason.

They're at Fiserv Forum for their first three games after the All-Star break, continuing a stretch of six consecutive home games. But once that home stand ends, they'll be on the road for 12 of their final 19 regular-season games.

"We can't afford to drop games that we shouldn't be dropping or have a multiple-game skid," Middleton said. "From here, we've just got to be playing our best basketball and act like it's the playoffs right now, because it's that close."

MLB lockout talks recess, will resume Monday; deadline nears

JUPITER, Fla. (AP)— With one day left before Major League Baseball's deadline to salvage a March 31 start to the regular season, representatives for the league and union paused exchanging formal proposals Sunday and instead held a series of small meetings probing for what it would take to reach a deal.

The sides head into Monday's league-mandated deadline day set to negotiate for the eighth straight day, which is progress given they had just s ix sessions on central economics from the start of the lockout through Feb. 20.

They were still far apart, but pressure is increasing. Players would lose $20.5 million in salary for each day of the season that is canceled, according to a study by The Associated Press, and the 30 teams would lose large sums that are harder to pin down.

Talks at Roger Dean Stadium, the spring training home of the Miami Marlins and St. Louis Cardinals, recessed around 7 p.m. Sunday and are set to resume at 10 a.m. Monday, an earlier start time than other meetings over the past week.

MLB has said Monday, the 89th day of the lockout, is the last day to reach a deal that would preserve a 162-game schedule, but it has not fixed an exact time to the deadline. That leads to the possibilty of bargaining sessions stretching into the wee hours if both sides see a deal within reach.

Monday was picked as a deadline because MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred says at least 28 days of training are needed before the season starts. The union has not said whether it agrees, and baseball has shortened spring training to as few as three weeks in the past.

AP

Negotiators for Major League Baseball and locked outs players met at Roger Dean Stadium in an attempt to reach an agreement to salvage March 31 openers and a 162-game season Sunday evening Feb. 27, 2022 in Jupiter, Fla.

Baseball's ninth work stoppage started Dec. 2. Spring training games were to have begun Saturday and already have been canceled through March 7.

Just three players attended the talks Sunday: Max Scherzer, Andrew Miller and Marcus Semien. Scherzer left the ballpark before bargaining broke for the night.

Players and owners did not meet directly.

Deputy Commissioner Dan Halem telephoned union chief negotiator Bruce Meyer on Sunday morning and asked for a 1-on-1 session in place of the scheduled larger group gathering.

That started a series of four short meetings characterized as an exchange of ideas that gave the union and MLB a better idea of the tradeoffs it would take to reach the end-point of bargaining that began last spring and resulted in the sport's first work stoppage since 1995.

Players and teams enter deadline day far apart on many key issues and unresolved on others. The most contentious proposals involve luxury tax thresholds and rates, the size of a new bonus pool for pre-arbitration players, minimum salaries, salary arbitration eligibility and the union's desire to change the club revenue sharing formula.

In addition, MLB has tied the elimination of direct free-agent compensation to players agreeing to higher luxury tax rates and still wants to expand the playoffs to 14 teams rather than the union's preference for 12. MLB also has kept its proposal for an international amateur draft on the table.

MLB executive vice president Morgan Sword, senior vice president Patrick Houlihan and vice president Reed MacPhail — a trio of officials familiar with many of the details of the intricate collective bargaining agreement — also met with the union. The expired contract numbered 359 pages plus separate deals covering benefits, joint drug rules and dealing with domestic violence allegations. There also are COVID-19 protocols.

Not since Aug 30, 2002, has MLB come this close to losing regular-season games to labor strife. The union was set to strike at 3:20 p.m. but roughly 25 consecutive hours of meetings and caucuses culminated in an agreement at 11:45 a.m.

Bargaining has not had that type of frequency this year but has gained momentum since talks shifted from New York to Florida last week.

MLB is offering to raise the luxury tax threshold from $210 million last season to $214 million this year, increasing it to $220 million by 2026. Teams also want higher tax rates, which the union says would tend to act like a salary cap.

Players have asked for a $245 million threshold this year, rising to $273 million by the final season.

The union wants to expand arbitration to include the top 35% by service time of players with at least two seasons of major league service and less than three, up from the 22% cutoff in place since 2013.

The union proposed the pre-arbitration pool have $115 million distributed to 150 players and management wants $20 million to be split among 30.

Lockout Limbo: Judge, Sale, others find fields to stay loose

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Aaron Judge stepped into the batting cage and sent a long, high drive completely out of the park.

Far behind the left-field wall, a couple of University of South Florida students paid no attention. They walked right past the stray ball that glistened in bright sunshine on the lush green grass – they had to get to class.

Campus life carries on. The big league baseball world these days, now that's a lot different.

Caught in lockout limbo, Judge and his New York Yankees teammates, Boston ace Chris Sale, Atlanta slugger Adam Duvall and others are doing their best to stay loose. Instead of playing on perfect diamonds in spring training games that had been set to start this weekend, they've taken to open fields all over.

"We've got to be ready," Yankees infielder Gio Urshela said after a session with Gleyber Torres at Leto High School in Tampa.

"We can't wait, just like sitting on the couch. We've just got to be working. We enjoy working out, like hitting, all that," he said.

There were players at one spring park — Max Scherzer, Gerrit Cole and Francisco Lindor were among those this week at Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter, Florida, home of the St. Louis Cardinals and Miami Marlins, for negotiations with owners.

Otherwise, the complexes are shut for the pros and exhibition games are canceled. So as the Major League Baseball lockout reached its 87th day Saturday, players are finding their own places to break out the bats and balls.

Oakland Athletics second baseman Tony Kemp and his former Vanderbilt teammates are holding their own spring camp of sorts in Nashville, Tennessee, along with a handful of big leaguers who didn't go to school there but are welcomed by longtime Commodores coach Tim Corbin.

Atlanta right-hander Kyle Wright is working out alongside Giants catcher Curt Casali and San Francisco outfielder Mike Yastrzemski, Kemp's old college roommate. Most of them live within 10 minutes of each other, so there's a support network off the diamond, too.

Duvall joined the mix Friday. Marlins catcher Jacob Stallings, Seattle second baseman Adam Frazier and free agent Phil Gosselin also have taken part.

"We've got a lot of guys up at Vanderbilt that train. It's a get-ready environment," Kemp said in a phone interview. "Honestly it's just a true blessing."

"I can't thank Corbin enough. It's the best, you have a bunch of guys and it makes for a good working environment because everyone is in there getting after it," he said. "Even right now we've been able to stay ready because we have the guys here that train in Nashville, we almost have enough to field a team."

Kemp is a new father to 8-week-old daughter McKenna Catherine, who is now sleeping six-hour stretches at night.

"She's been an angel baby, to be honest," the proud pop said.

From Judge crushing balls in Tampa to Sale throwing off a mound in Fort Myers at his alma mater of Florida Gulf Coast University, lockout workouts are in full swing.

The two-hour, on-field sessions at USF have all the ingredients of normal spring training. There is stretching, throwing, defensive work and even pitchers tossing live batting practice with major league balls.

Beyond that it's a whole different ballgame, with no fans and no stadium music.

Team rivalries are irrelevant, and major leaguers mix with minor leaguers. Judge's teammates, DJ LeMahieu and Luke Voit, have worked out with ex-Yankee Mike Ford, Baltimore's Richie Martin, Minnesota's Tim Beckham and Toronto's Mallex Smith.

The South Florida players and staff have lent a hand.

"We have some great people helping us," LeMahieu said. "They're awesome. They're out there grinding with us. It's been good to work with some other guys from different organizations."

Most of the normal amenities are nonexistent.

The big league players occupy most of the parking spots on a small stretch of grass behind the right-field fence. Others park on a nearby side street, bringing along equipment bags with names like Dodgers and Marlins stenciled on them.

There are no post-workout meals or showers. When the session ends, the players collect their gear and go to their vehicles. A few change shirts in the lot before departing.

The venues also vary greatly.

The USF Baseball Stadium opened in 2011 and is considered a facility that could host a NCAA regional or super regional.

Urshela and Torres have been at a high school about 15 minutes away from Steinbrenner Field, the currently empty Yankees' spring training complex. The park features a quaint set of metal bleachers behind the plate and a small press box above the red-painted, third-base dugout.

Tampa Bay Rays pitcher Nick Anderson might have the most unusual location — he's tossing in the parking lot of his physical therapist's office. The right-hander, expected to start the season on the injured list because of an elbow injury, plays catch there after getting treatment.

Poland, Sweden refuse to play Russia in World Cup playoffs

WARSAW, Poland (AP)— Poland's refusal to play its World Cup qualifier against Russia next month in response to that nation's invasion of Ukraine gained wider support when Sweden followed with its own plans to protest to FIFA on Saturday.

Polish soccer federation president Cezary Kulesza announced Poland's decision and said it was in talks with other federations to present a unified position to FIFA, which is responsible for the March 24 game in Moscow.

"No more words, time to act!" Kulesza wrote on Twitter, adding the move was prompted by the "escalation of the aggression."

Also Saturday, Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich suddenly handed over the "stewardship and care" of the Premier League club to its charitable foundation trustees. The move came after a member of the British parliament called for the Russian billionaire to hand over the club in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Abramovich, who has owned Chelsea since 2003, made no mention of the war in his statement.\

He said: "I have always taken decisions with the Club's best interest at heart. I remain committed to these values. That is why I am today giving trustees of Chelsea's charitable Foundation the stewardship and care of Chelsea."

AP

Poland's Robert Lewandowski controls the ball during the World Cup 2022 group I qualifying soccer match between Poland and England, at the Narodowy stadium in Warsaw, Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2021.

Poland captain Robert Lewandowski and goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny were among those supporting its federation's decision, with the Bayern Munich striker saying "we can't pretend that nothing is happening."

Sweden, a potential opponent of Russia in next month's playoffs, later joined Poland in declaring its national team would not play a match against the Russians regardless of where it takes place.

The Czech Republic, another team to potentially face Russia, is likely to follow suit.

Under the circumstances, "it's almost impossible to imagine that such a game would take place," said Petr Fousek, the head of the Czech football association. "It's very likely we will follow the Polish and Swedish scenario."

The association's executive committee will meet later to decide, Fousek said.

Sweden made its position clear.

"The illegal and deeply unjust invasion of Ukraine currently makes all football fixtures with Russia impossible," said Karl-Erik Nilsson, the Swedish federation's chairman. "We therefore urge FIFA to decide that the playoff matches in March in which Russia participates will be canceled."

The winner of the Poland-Russia match is due to host Sweden or the Czech Republic on March 29 for a place at the World Cup being played in Qatar from Nov. 21-Dec. 18.

"We have a hard time believing," Nilsson added, "that FIFA will not follow our call. Russia can not join as long as this madness continues."

Nilsson is also first vice president at UEFA which has stripped Russia of hosting the Champions League final in St. Petersburg in May. UEFA decided Friday to move that game to Paris.

Lewandowski, Poland's all-time leading scorer and winner of FIFA's best-player award for the past two years, supported Kulesza's announcement.

"I can't imagine playing a match with the Russian National Team in a situation when armed aggression in Ukraine continues," Lewandowski said on Twitter. "Russian footballers and fans are not responsible for this, but we can't pretend that nothing is happening."

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	37	23	.617	—
Boston	36	27	.571	2½
Toronto	32	27	.542	4½
Brooklyn	32	29	.525	5½
New York	25	36	.410	12½

Southeast Division

Miami	40	21	.656	—
Charlotte	30	32	.484	10½
Atlanta	29	31	.483	10½
Washington	27	33	.450	12½
Orlando	14	47	.230	26

Central Division

Chicago	39	22	.639	—
Cleveland	36	24	.600	2½
Milwaukee	36	25	.590	3
Indiana	21	41	.339	18½
Detroit	15	46	.246	24

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Memphis	42	20	.677	—
Dallas	36	25	.590	5½
New Orleans	25	36	.410	16½
San Antonio	24	37	.393	17½
Houston	15	45	.250	26

Northwest Division

Utah	38	22	.633	—
Denver	36	25	.590	2½
Minnesota	32	29	.525	6½
Portland	25	36	.410	13½
Oklahoma City	19	41	.317	19

Pacific Division

Phoenix	49	12	.803	—
Golden State	43	18	.705	6
L.A. Clippers	32	31	.508	18
L.A. Lakers	27	33	.450	21½
Sacramento	22	40	.355	27½

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALEKSENKO

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with a time of 58:20 with Lindsay Nash completing the Top 3 in 58:40.

"The running route was somewhat easy and I just ran fast so I could have a big lead. While the water route was alright. At first I couldn't see because of my goggles so I had to stop swimming and fix it," said Chavez about the aquathlon.

The Saipan International School student also said she didn't really focus on topping the race when she joined.

"I just told myself to work hard and have fun. Turns out I got first place," said Chavez, who dedicated her victory to her coaches and family.

A total of 28 multi-sport athletes took part in the run-swim-run segment of the 7th Saipan Aquathlon & 10K Pathway Run. The 10K run were topped by veteran runner Kosuke Sato (men) and Akiko Miller (women).

The 7th Saipan Aquathlon & 10K Pathway Run was organized by the Triathlon Association of the CNMI and sponsored by IT&E and the Tan Siu Lin Foundation. It was

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kaithlyn Chavez, center, won the women's division of the the run and swim portion of the 7th Saipan Aquathlon & 10K Pathway Run last Saturday.

PIKABOO

From Page 20

Shane is that he didn't really got the chance to complete MRA's 2021 season due to injuries.

"I'm on a mission this year because I missed two rounds of the season last year due to injuries so I'm definitely giving my best this year to see where I stand and I really want that No. 1 plate! Last year was my first time ever getting to race with my dad and brother in the same class so we all want to see who's the best out of the family. We've always been very competitive and it just pushes us to all get better!"

Aside from his family, Shane also gave a shoutout to his sponsors Cycles Plus Guam, who helped him get his new 2022 KX250F; TrenchTech Racing Team; and RoilSoil.

"I'd like to thank my parents the most. This has always been our family thing when we were younger and it's so awesome We get to live it and do it all again these days as a family. Also would like to thank all our awesome fans and supporters who come out and watched all the action go down and cheer on all the riders! Huge thanks to MRA for always hosting awesome races and the volunteer flaggers for helping keep us safe," he said.

In the Mini I Class, Jonah Santos took the checkered flag with 47 points, followed by Harley Susulin and Te'Ohnn Put with the 42 points and 38 points, respectively.

Vicente Palacios was the leader in the Mini II Class with 47 points. T.J. Ferrer actually finished tied with Palacios with 47 points, but came in second in the second heat. Devin Yumul completed the Top 3 with 38 points.

DECM

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a 5-point salvo at the end to lead DECM to victory following its loss to NAPA Auto last week.

Steady Ed Pangelinan provided much-needed scoring support for Tabora with 15 markers, while starting center Andy Viola and Denis Calunsag chipped in 9 markers apiece.

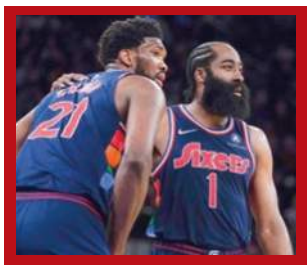
Sedillo paced MDC in the heart-breaking loss with 26 markers with Martin and Rodney Catalla adding 12 points and 11 points, respectively.

Earlier in the evening, Blu Haus withstood repeated comeback attempts by NAPA Auto to take the early lead in the masters division after an 85-77 victory. NAPA Auto, who played minus center Jun Alipio, led after the first two quarters, 21-17 and 47-40. Blu Haus, led by its powerhouse cast, would take the lead after three quarters of play, 65-60, and then held on in the final 5 minutes thanks to veteran guard Elmer Esdrelon's clutch plays, which included an and-1 fastbreak play that finally broke the backs of NAPA Auto.

DECM 92 - Tabora 38, Pangelinan 15, Viola 9, Calunsag 9, Joson 8, Salazar 4, Ja. Gatdula 5, Jo. Gatdula 4.

MDC 90 - Sedillo 26, Martin 12, Catalla 11, Villarin 8, Manipon 7, Calbone 7, Dela Torre 7, Baterina 5, Tolentino 4, Saplan 3.

Scoring by quarters: 15-22, 45-43, 68-72, 92-90.



Joel Embiid, James Harden help 76ers beat Knicks, 125-109

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‘Pikaboo’ back-to-back in Expert Class

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Shane “Pikaboo” Alvarez made it back-to back wins in the Expert Class of the 2022 Monster Energy Point Series Race after winning the February edition last Sunday at the Cowtown Race Track.

The 26-year-old Financial & Insurance Services Group staff again completed a sweep of the two heats to finish with a perfect 50 points. He got the better of his father, Cuki, and brother, Alverick anew to top the division. Cuki finished second on both beats to end up with 44 points, while Alverick was third on both races for 40 points.

Shane said he had a “super fun and great time” in the February race of the Marianas Racing Association.

“I was able to get a great start in both heat races of the day. I got the hole shot for both so I came out in front after the first turn. Getting the hole shot is a huge advantage because you have a clear track in front of you and can see and hit your lines good,” he said.

Sunday’s searing hot conditions also meant that the track was dry and dusty, which was another incentive to take the lead from the get-go for Shane.

“Everyone behind me had to ride through my dust clouds and everyone else’s if they are farther behind so definitely more challenging for the rest of the pack which is why getting the hole shot is really important! My dad and brother were sticking on me the first few laps although having to ride partially blind because of the dust in some areas,” he said.

Despite topping the February race, the win wasn’t exactly in the bag for Shane as family was close behind, literally and figuratively.

“After about three laps and having a clear track I was able to lengthen my lead a little bit and just kept pushing and inching away from them. My dad and I had a drag race to the first turn in both heats side by side. Luckily both times I was in the inside and able to hold him off and start the races in front. I give my best every race because my dad and brother are definitely very fast and if they were in front I’d have a hard time passing too. It was super fun and I’m stoked and feeling great having a perfect record so far in the first two heats!”

Another motivation for

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MICHAEL JORNAL

Shane “Pikaboo” Alvarez in action in the Expert Class of the 2022 Monster Energy Point Series Race last Sunday at the Cowtown Race Track.

Aleksenko, Chavez top aquathlon

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Isaiah Aleksenko, center, is all smiles after winning the men’s aquathlon of the 7th Saipan Aquathlon & 10K Pathway Run last Saturday.

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Youngsters Isaiah Aleksenko and Kaithlyn Chavez topped the run and swim portion of the 7th Saipan Aquathlon & 10K Pathway Run held along the Froilan C. Tenorio Beach Road Pathway and in the waters off Kilili Beach last Saturday.

Aleksenko was the first among the men to complete the 2.5-kilometer run, 1-kilometer swim, and 2.5-km run in 46:25. The Marianas High School student was followed by Jakey Deleon Guerrero and Michael Miller with times of 46:32 ad 49:04, respectively.

“The water was alrighty and the running route was pretty short so I liked it. I knew I would had a positive mindset that I would win this race,” said Aleksenko when asked about his thoughts on the two-sport race.

Chavez, meanwhile, was the first to cross the finish line among the women after clocking in at 53:44 to make it back-to-back wins in the event. Jennie Thompson came in second

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DECM slips past MDC in masters caging

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

DECM Construction leveled its win-loss record in the masters division of the Inaugural SCLC Basketball League at 1-1 after nipping Marianas Dental Clinic, 92-90, last Saturday at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Gymnasium in Gualo Rai.

“Smoking” Jun Tabora was spectacular all game long and scored 12 of his game-high 38 points in the fourth quarter, including his team’s last 5 points, to tow DECM to victory.

MDC actually took the initiative in the early goings of the contest and led 22-15, thanks to the 8 early points of last-minute addition Fradel Sedillo.

DECM buckled down to work in the second quarter with Tabora starting to smolder with 14 points as his team took a 45-43 advantage at the half.

Speedy Martin Moreno then unloaded 7 off his 12 total points at the start of the second half as the seesaw battle continued in the third with MDC carrying a 72-68 spread into the fourth and final quarter.

It was still nip-and-tuck in the final 10 minutes of the contest with neither team giving the other any safe lead. Tabora though, true to his gunslinging ways, was just too good for any MDC defender assigned to him and unleashed

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MARK RABAGO

Blu Haus’ Jojo Elchico drives baseline against NAPA Auto’s Bryan Manabat in their masters game in the Inaugural SCLC Basketball League last Saturday at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Gymnasium in Gualo Rai.